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P70

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DREAM CYCLING HOLIDAY**

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RAIL A BERM... LIKE A BOSS!

P14

TELL A GOOD CYCLING JOKE

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**PERFECT
YOUR PEDAL STROKE**

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Hos Ja!

JACK PAROW'S VET FIETS

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PHOTOGRAPH BY CRAIG KOLESKY



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Bicycling®

SA'S BEST-SELLING CYCLING MAGAZINE

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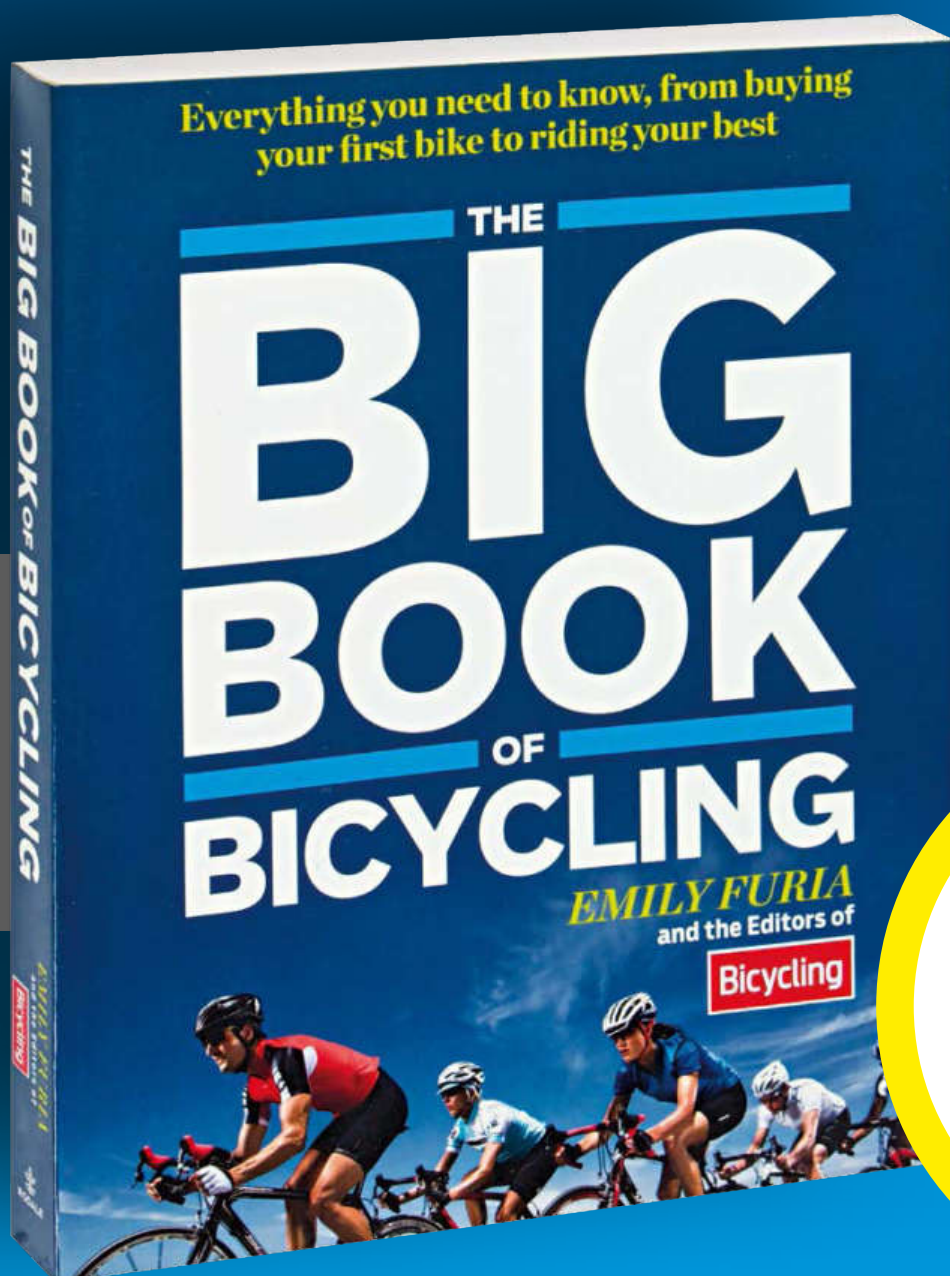


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THE GETAWAY

IMAGE BY KEVIN SAWYER

Stage races are about more than racing. They're a chance for riders to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life, and enjoy South Africa in a different way. This shot from last year's Berg & Bush shows how you can experience the beauty of the country, while also witnessing the simplicity of some of the remote villages the race takes you through. This is what makes stage races special: your obligations are narrowed down to getting up, eating and riding... and seeing your surroundings from a new perspective.

WHERE Spioenkop Hills

WHEN 12 October 2014

METADATA Canon EOS 1D mkIII, f/2.5, Focal length:16mm

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THE INBOX

FAMILY TIME

My daughter was diagnosed with retinoblastoma, a rare eye cancer only found in children under five. Her eye had to be removed but thankfully the cancer hadn't spread up her optic nerve into her brain. The first thing we did when she got home? Read your awesome magazine. I think she probably likes it as much as I do. Thank you for the best magazine ever.

– KOLE SMITH

WIN!

→ Email your RANTS & RAVES! – to andre.valentine@media24.com AND STAND A CHANCE TO WIN A **LEZYNE MINI GPS** VALUED AT R1 995!



FACEBOOK FEEDBACK

DETAILS ON THE NEW ENTRY SYSTEM FOR THE 2016 CAPE TOWN CYCLE TOUR. GET UP TO SPEED SO YOU DON'T MISS OUT!

bicycling.co.za/ctct-ballot

“So now, after my 21st tour, being a loyal supporter of the event, there is a real possibility I may not get an entry for next year because of the ballot... sucks!” – Mark Sanvido

“Meh! Think I'll give it a skip next year – too complicated, too busy, will stick to the trail.” – Matthew Levy

“Number of tours completed is not taken into account? So people who have done the last 20 races might have to miss out next year? Harsh.” – Edrich

“What about so-called ‘VIP Riders’ like myself who have done the Cycle Tour 29 to 31 times, or more? Very disheartening to think I might not get in! I am a member of the Pedal Power Association. Entering is an annual event for me.”

– Merl van der Spuy

READER SURVEY

WHAT'S YOUR CURRENT CEREAL OF CHOICE?

JUNGLE OATS	28%
FUTURELIFE	24%
MUESLI	11%
WEET-BIX	11%
PRONUTRO	8%
I DON'T EAT CEREAL	7%
OTHER	11%



MTN WITHDRAWS SPONSORSHIP FOR @TEAMMTNQHUBEKA

@DASCONNEXION Why agree to the sponsorship in the first place, if knowing not going to reach target market on TV watching TdF?

@ONLYCRAIG1 @Bicycling_SA @TeamMTNQhubeka, this is not good news after such an impressive performance at Tour de France.

@LIEZLHENRICH @Bicycling_SA @TeamMTNQhubeka obviously are not into sport – return on investment... ridiculous! Millions of people saw the MTN name on TV.

@WINHOEK @Bicycling_SA @TeamMTNQhubeka very sad/funny how they wait after the Tour to get all the TV coverage then pull the plug.

@CINDOS @Bicycling_SA @SGHutch @TeamMTNQhubeka Didn't know you *needed* return on investment – that's why it's called sponsorship, right? **B**

Cyclism: ATTACK (VERB)

WHAT IS IT?

TO ACCELERATE RAPIDLY AWAY FROM THE PELOTON TO SECURE EITHER A BREAKAWAY OR A WIN – OR TO SHOW YOUR FELLOW COMPETITORS WHAT A BEAST YOU ARE. THIS CAN BE DONE ‘OFF THE FRONT’, ‘AROUND THE SIDE’ OR ‘SLINGSHOTTING FROM THE BACK’. THE KEY TO A REAL ATTACK IS NOT TO BE REELED IN 100 METRES LATER, THEREBY BECOMING THE VICTIM OF A ‘DISDAINFUL GROUP STARE-DOWN’.



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W

E MAKE NO EXCUSES FOR PRODUCING A MAGAZINE THAT HELPS YOU BECOME A BETTER

RIDER. That's why we mesh together (see what I did there?) the best international writers and the best local experts in a monthly magazine – and online site – that help you improve on every area of your cycling, no matter what discipline of the sport you love.

We're often asked why we don't do more on past races. The answer is simple: given the lag time inherent in producing a magazine, by the time *Bicycling* appears on shelf the race is long forgotten, and everyone's looking forward to what's next.

It's the 'what's next' that interests us all. Everything – from the best races to

recipe, so you can make it too (turn to page 31 if you're hungry).

We also looked closely at one of the most common cycling ailments – a sore back – and found some startling facts and figures on how common it is (so you don't feel alone) and some sure-fire ways to fix it. And we hired one of the big-bearded guys from the travel magazine down the corridor to model a new pair of sunglasses for us – just to prove that *anyone* can look cool in cycling gear, even if they never ride a bike!

One of my favourite regulars in the mag is 'My Bike', and this month gear editor Oli Munnik has come up with a pearler: Jack Parow's custom Momen. If you don't know why just about everyone is riding bikes these days, then turn

“ **Everything – from the best races to do, places to visit, adventures to be had and gear to be ogled at and bought – is about 'what's next'.**

do, places to visit, adventures to be had and gear to be ogled at and bought – is about 'what's next'.

In this issue we've focused a large part of our editorial on doing what we do best, thereby improving not only our cycling lives, but hopefully yours too.

Jonathan Ancer went in search of Boks on Bikes (p48); what he found will inspire you to ride, even if you're built like ex-Springbok prop (and captain) John Smit. Then we interviewed former Chef of the Year David Higgs, and asked him what MTN-Qhubeka's favourite meal was at the Tour de France. And once he'd told us, we asked him for the

to page 44 and see what the Zef-rock legend thinks is lekka! Hos ja!

In all there are 132 tips in this magazine (for real – we got editorial assistant André Valentine to count them... twice, just to be sure!) over and above the usual mix of great races to plan for, inspiring rides to put on your bucket list, and a glimpse of the amazing bike tech coming your way in 2016.

We've loved putting this issue together, and we've learnt a lot along the way. We hope you enjoy it just as much.

Mike
EDITOR

@MIKEFINCHSA



ON THE COVER

How To: Rail A Berm

With the perfect trail conditions that spring brings, there's no better time to master berms. Here's how to get started.

LOOK, THEN LEAN Study the berm's graceful arc before hitting it at speed. First, check the angle and height of the bank: the steeper it is, the more you can lean – your bike should be perpendicular to the bank – and the faster you can go. Next, find the grooved track where experienced riders have ridden the fastest line – that's the one you want to hit. Note how that line winds through the berm (a constant arc – low entrance/high exit, or high entrance/low exit) so you know where to go.

MOVE YOUR FINGERS With your body in a ready-to-attack position (standing on the pedals with cranks level, knees slightly bent; arms bent, elbows up and out; eyes looking ahead), enter the berm. Force yourself to move your fingers off the brake levers and onto your bar, and keep them there until you exit.

LEAD WITH YOUR ELBOW Don't stare at your front wheel, or even at the apex of the turn – look ahead to the exit, and you'll find it easier to stay on course. At the same time, be sure to keep your outside elbow (so if it's a left turn, your right elbow) up and out.

STEP ON THE GAS Berms are all about speed. Go slowly, and you'll be forced to the bottom of the berm, where you can't make use of the bank. Go faster, however, and your tyres will drive into the more-vertical surface as you lean in.


– By Brian Fiske



NO PACK, NO PROBLEMS

Mountain Liner Pro Bib Shorts with SWAT put everything that you need right where you want it. With an improved on-the-body pocket design, the new SWAT virtually eliminates the need for packs. So now, you can spend more time finding new trails, and less time worrying about carrying your gear over them. Wear it, pack it, and go—it's the logical way to meet the trail head-on.

Specialized.com/swat







ISTOCKPHOTO

SA Needs Commutement

Inspired by his Danube cycling holiday, **Dave Moseley** decides to give Cape Town's green cycle lanes a whirl – and discovers that unlike our European cousins, we have no culture...

Though we in Africa are sensitive to being told what to do by Europeans, in terms of cycling there's a lot we can learn from our imperialistically-minded cousins who suffer through first-world crises – like an overabundance of rhubarb in summer.

In July I was lucky enough to enjoy a cycling holiday down the Danube. (Note to jealous readers: the trip was paid for by my in-laws. I offered to buy a round, but when six beers came to the equivalent of a small flat in Camps Bay, I promptly 'lost' my wallet.)

We spent three days in Munich, where cycle lanes abound, and tourists, city-dwellers and working stiffs pedal around in great big orderly peletons. My wife and I almost caused a national news sensation when, coming upon a flashing-red-man robot at a pedestrian crossing, we did the South African thing of sprinting across the road. Such were the looks of disgust we received that we immediately looked for a pothole to disappear into – only to find perfect, uniform tar all around us.

The sheer number of bikes and cyclists of all shapes and sizes and the depth of cycling culture along our route were eye-popping. Our Rad & Riesen (bike and boat) started in a small town called Passau, where the Danube, Inn and Ilz rivers join. It's overwhelmingly picturesque, like an idyllic toy town plucked from a snow globe and dropped into real life.

Passau is a starting point for numerous cycle cruises, part of the Danube cycle path, which starts in Germany's Black Forest and ends about 2 900km later, at the Black Sea. The path passes through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria and the Ukraine.

Our trip took us from Germany into Slovakia and on to Budapest in Hungary, before we turned for the biking and commuting mecca of Vienna.

Vienna is billed as the cycling capital of the Danube route (1 200km of cycle lanes, the city boasts), and with its safe roads and insane orderliness, many people prefer riding the Austrian stretch of the Danube. Coming from the wild west of South Africa's roads, it was an enlightening experience. Every town and city we passed through – even bustling Budapest – was cycling-friendly. It helps that the Danube path is clearly demarcated and solely for bikes, but even the cities and towns off the path were thoroughly 'bikeable'.

Energised by the experience, I came home and vowed to commute to work – only 8km down Cape Town's Albert Road, famous for its much-ignored green bike lane. Looking at how it works in Europe, commuting could well be a way of life in Cape Town. But two days of riding in the Mother City made me realise that while we have lots of bikes in South Africa, we have no cycling culture.

Here, we race. We PB. We Strava. We bomb down trails. We're all about "Have you done the Epic?" and "What's your Argus time?" So far, since coming back from Europe, only once have I seen another commuter.

I'm being very Cape Town-specific, and I know Joburg and Durban are doing their bit to get cycle lanes built, but people all over SA need to realise that the bike can be a way of life. The authorities building cycle lanes need to do more to encourage people to use them. If we want more cyclists, we need to create a culture of cycling – because right now, in South Africa, that doesn't actually exist. **B**



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EDITED BY ANDRÉ VALENTINE



THE ONE THING THAT CHANGED IT ALL

→ A RAINY DAY

One Boxing Day, my butt was starting to hurt from sitting so much. So the following day I bought a bike. The first thing I did was start riding to my friend's house, about 20km away. I did 4 or 5km. I started that ride on three occasions, and one day I made it all the way. While I was there it started raining. My friend couldn't give me a lift home, so I rode back. But I didn't feel tired; I felt empowered. I was no longer constrained to riding around the area. I felt like I had a new city – when you ride, you experience a place in a different way.

MICHAEL 'COOLASSMIKE' BOWERS, 43 /
NETWORK ENGINEER



Actual Size

INTRODUCING THE SMALLEST CYCLING GPS DEVICE IN THE WORLD.



Photo: Sam Wiebe

RYAN ANDERSON, TEAM OPTUM PRO CYCLING P/B KBS

The elegant **Mini GPS** is lightweight, easy to use and ideal for the cycling minimalist. Weighing only 29 grams and housed in a elegant metallic bezel, the compact device is still powerful enough to record up to 100 hours of accurate cycling data. The ultra sharp, semi-customizable display features auto-scrolling ride stats and custom lap presets. Rides are saved as .fit files and can be seamlessly uploaded to our free, intuitive **GPS ROOT** website for detailed analysis and cataloging; no additional software is needed. Simply plug it into a computer via micro-USB to upload rides, and to recharge the unit for up to 10 hours of runtime.

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► I RAN OVER A BLOB OF CHEWING GUM. HOW DO I GET IT OFF MY TYRE?

Act fast. Sticky stuff like gum or even tar on a tyre can pick up tiny pieces of glass and other detritus; and before you know it, you'll be on the side of the road installing a new tube. Work as much of the gum off the rubber as you can, using your fingers or a tool with a firm (but not sharp) edge. If there's still residue after the ride or during a break, try this: "Freeze the gum with an ice cube, then flick or scrape it off the tyre," says tyre-builder Chris Clinton. ►



ASK BICYCLING

► ALL YOUR RIDE QUANDARIES – SOLVED!

► What cycling books are absolute necessities on my shelf – or at least, worth a look?

There are too many excellent choices to list, but we can recommend a few favourites to get your bike-book collection started.

If you're interested in training advice, try *The Cyclist's Training Bible* (R334, takealot.co.za) by über-coach Joe Friel.

If brushing up your MTB skills is on the agenda, Alex Morris's *Mountain Bike Skills Manual* (R336, takealot.co.za) offers skills tips and training advice for all levels.

Adventurers will appreciate *Riding The Dragon's Spine* (eBook R161, takealot.co.za), a detailed and storied insight into the 4 000km mountain-bike trail that stretches across South Africa.

If you're a bike historian, or into retro bikes, then David Rapley's *Racing Bicycles* (R784, takealot.co.za) is the *ne plus ultra* of historical tomes.

Rebour: The Bicycle Illustrations of Daniel Rebour by Rob van der Plas and Frank Berto (R673, takealot.co.za) offers a history of one of cycling's pre-eminent artists, with drawings that will be instantly familiar to anyone who's perused a Campy catalogue.

Want to repair your own bike? Shameless plug here, but our own *Bicycling Guide to Complete Bicycle Maintenance and Repair* (R140, fitshop.co.za) will guide you through any fix.

► My jersey is covered in salt stains after rides, but my friend's is clean. Is there something wrong with one of us?

Don't worry; you're both normal. As sweat evaporates, it leaves behind minerals – the same electrolytes that sports drinks and supplements are designed to replace. The amount and composition of sweat can vary from person to person, and may even change over time. Much of that variability is genetically determined and not well understood, says W. Larry Kenney, PhD, a professor of physiology and kinesiology at Penn State University in the US. As your aerobic fitness increases and you get better acclimated to hot weather, you may have a higher perspiration rate and less salty sweat, he says. Your jersey's wicking capacity could also affect the amount of salt left on the fabric, and darker colours will highlight the white mineral deposits. In certain circles, salt-crusted gear after a hard ride is considered a badge of honour, so rock it with pride.

► I know you should never clamp a carbon bike in a work stand by the frame. But what about a carbon seatpost?

Not a problem, says Calvin Jones, director of education at Park Tool. Unlike thin-walled top tubes and seat tubes, carbon posts are thick and



strong, he says. Seatpost makers concur. "Any carbon seatpost worth its modulus is inherently designed to be clamped in the bike frame," says Sean Coffey, marketing director at Ritchey. Most modern work stands use a relatively low-pressure combo clamp: Push the ratcheting jaws together to close around the post, then spin the dial to adjust clamp pressure. Do exercise caution with the powerful, lever-style clamps on some Park professional stands, says Jones. His rule of thumb: "Turn the adjusting barrel so the clamp handle will shut when using only two fingers. If you have to shove it closed with your entire hand, the adjustment is too tight." Oh, and that prohibition on clamping carbon frames? That's good advice for frames of any material.

► Why is the yellow jersey yellow?

Like much of cycling lore, the true origin of the Tour de France's *maillot jaune* is somewhat murky. As we've reported (*Bicycling* Jul/Aug 2015), it's generally believed that the jersey took its colour from the yellow paper used by *L'Auto*, the newspaper that was the Tour's first primary sponsor. But cycling historians Bill and Carol McGann say this might not be the case. They suggest that the sunny hue has less to do with providing publicity for the event's main sponsor, and more to do with keeping operating costs to a minimum. Yellow jerseys were less popular than jerseys of other colours, and were therefore cheaper to obtain.

(UM...)
**I GET
NAUSEOUS
BEFORE RACES,
BUT I KNOW I
NEED TO EAT.
ANY IDEAS?**

"Choose foods that are familiar and easy to digest," says nutritionist Jordan Dubé. Safe options include bananas, rice, apple purée, toast – which is also called the BRAT diet; doctors prescribe it when you have a stomach bug. If that doesn't help, try going without solid food on race morning. "If you have your pre-race meal the night before, you actually don't need to eat breakfast," says dietician Nanci Guest. To replace breakfast, try mixing one part juice with two parts water and a pinch of sea salt. It's easy to absorb, will top off your glycogen stores, and shouldn't upset your stomach, she says.

6.4

PERCENTAGE BUMP IN 40KM
TIME-TRIAL PERFORMANCE
THAT WELL-TRAINED FEMALE
CYCLISTS GAINED AFTER
ADDING TWO DAYS PER
WEEK OF LEG-STRENGTH
TRAINING TO THEIR
SCHEDULES FOR 11 WEEKS.

SOURCE: SCANDINAVIAN JOURNAL OF MEDICINE AND SCIENCE IN SPORTS

► Got any good bike jokes?

We polled pros, staff, and even professional comedians for bicycle jokes, and everyone sent over the same classic. You be the judge of whether it's any good: A cyclist dies and meets Saint Peter at the gates of heaven. The saint gives him the tour and leads him into a magnificent velodrome, filled with cyclists racing custom track bikes. "You'll be fitted for a bike of your own, and your personal masseuse will be available every day," Saint Peter tells the amazed cyclist. When a pro flies by on a gold-plated Cervélo, the cyclist says to the saint, "Wow, he was fast! Is that Eddy Merckx?" Saint Peter replies, "No, that was God. He only wishes he were Eddy Merckx."

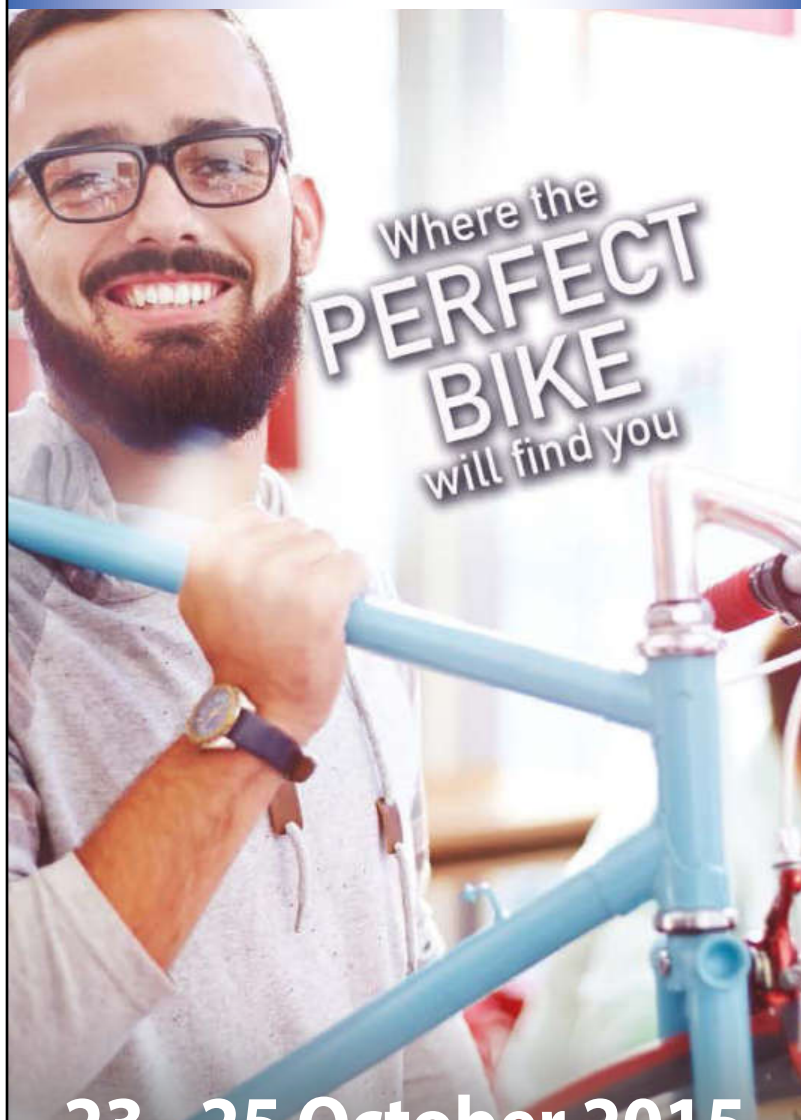
► Who was the first female pro cyclist?

This answer is more complicated than you might expect: While female racers have been competing since the dawn of bicycles, professional women's cycling as we know it today can trace back its history only about 20 years, when financial support and sponsorships began increasing opportunities for women. That said, while technically an amateur, Beryl Burton had the most extraordinary career of any woman cyclist ever, says cycling historian Andrew Ritchie. "On several occasions she raced among the men and even beat the men's record in a 12-hour time trial in 1967," he says. She also won the UK women's 16-, 40-, and 80km championships for 25 consecutive years. No other athlete in women's racing history has shown such consistency, determination, and sheer athletic grit. ⁸

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STEAM CAT CENTRAL

BY OLI MUNNIK

PHOTO BY JAMES GARAGHTY

Handmade in Cadore, Italy, and sporting polarised Carl Zeiss lenses, Rapha's versatile Classic Glasses are as much a fashion statement as they are 'sporting' eyewear. In fact, with their classic, elegant shape and tortoiseshell finish, you may be forgiven for thinking they're purely for casual wear.

But on closer examination, however, small details – like the concise rubber grippers on the temples for improved grip, a curved 'wraparound' shape for a performance fit, and shorter temples, to fit all helmets – reveal that actually, Rapha Classics are perfect cycling eyewear.

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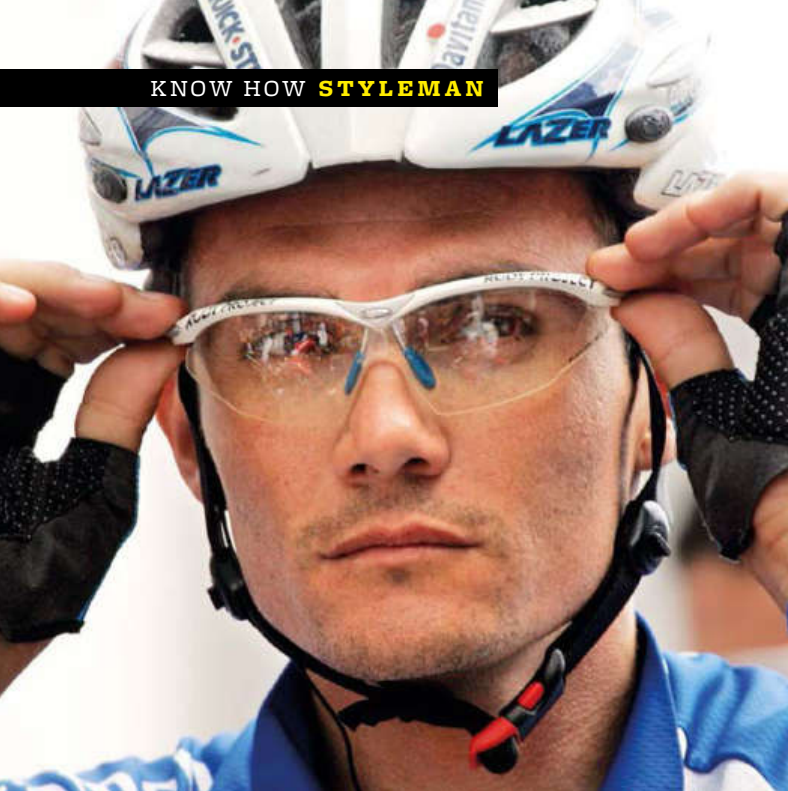
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LOSING YOUR COOL

Is there any man *less cool* than Richard Virenque?

– John, Berea

Yes, but not many. He lied, he cried, and he didn't get fried. It's one of cycling's greatest travesties that he's managed to be accepted back into the fold with no attendant shame. It's not so much that he cheated – it's that he and the French seem to care so little about it. Brad Wiggins said this in a column for the *Guardian* in 2012, which got up Virenque's nose. Wiggins was confused by the French revering a doper – caught doping in Britain, he'd have been seriously castigated. "To be honest, I'm quite surprised and disappointed to have been attacked this way by Bradley Wiggins," Virenque told *Cyclism'Actu*. "What's the point, what is the purpose? I do not understand it." The point, Ricky, is to let it be known that you are uncool.

"If Wiggins wants to be adored by the French public, I would advise him to be more aggressive – like a Thomas Voeckler, a Sylvain Chavanel, or a Pierre Rolland," Virenque continued. "And also to speak more French, so the public can appreciate him."

Here's the thing: none of those French riders has won the Tour. The main language at the Tour is English. John, the uncoolest thing about Virenque is that he thinks the Tour is still a little race in France. He missed the TdF going global.

Cyrille Guimard, the legendary team manager, tried to back up Virenque, saying, "Wiggins says what he thinks; the facts are not discussed. Road cycling is poorly developed in England, it does not have the doping culture that you can have in Latin countries. For Wiggins, someone who has been caught doping should not be a hero. But Virenque, at the time, when he went to take the mountains jersey, created emotions. It does not fade."

Virenque still a hero? *That's uncool, John*; but that doping's seen as part of cycling development is the most uncool thing of all. **B**

GALLO / GETTY IMAGES

RIDER ² RIDER

► USEFUL TIPS FROM OUR READERS

WINNING TIP

Cramp Stamp

Use Rennie's antacid to combat cramp – it works like a bomb. I normally carry six with me, and I'll have two before the race; if I feel a cramp coming on, I just have two more.

– Clinton Fowler



Wrap It Good Now

Wrap insulation tape around your frame or bars. If any attached parts – like lights or pumps – come loose, you can use the insulation tape to fix them back on your bike.

– Kyle

Shed The Load

When upgrading your front light, keep the old one for using around the house during load-shedding.

– Ashley Moxley



WIN!

A VERMARC CYCLING JERSEY WORTH R1 299

→ Email your Reader Tip to bicycling@media24.com. If it's selected as the Winning Tip, this rad prize could be yours.

PRO TWEETS

Lance Armstrong

@[lancearmstrong](#) "Thanks to the best staff in the world! cc @[mellowjohnnys](#)" (After retweeting @[austing360](#) "Lance Armstrong's store Mellow Johnny's makes list of country's best bike shops.") ►



Hendrik Lemmer @GrootLem "So now that SA is getting a women-only MTB stage race, who is giving us a men-only race – or will there be an outcry if women are excluded?"

Jay Robert Thomson @JayRThomson "Hand on face... Getting a coffee before flight to Florence has now become the most expensive coffee I'll ever have... #Idiot" (JRT facepalming after optimistically prioritising caffeine over boarding procedure)

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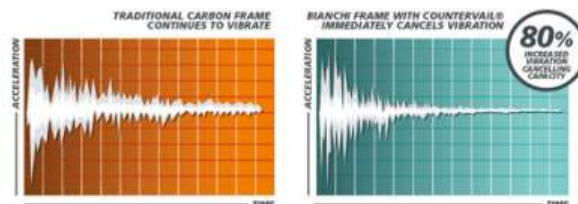
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Riding Essentials

FROM CASH TO SUNNIES, MAKE SURE YOU ALWAYS TAKE THE RIGHT GEAR WITH YOU ON YOUR TRAINING RIDES.

When I start a ride, it takes me ages to get ready – because getting ready for a bike ride is about so much more than just the bike. You need all the essentials before leaving the door: helmet, gloves, glasses, etc. Here's a list of the kit I never leave home without.

HELMET Obviously number one. Never go riding without a helmet – it could save your life.

SUNGLASSES In addition to protecting your eyes from the sun, they keep out all the unwanted bugs and dust. If it's raining, I always keep my glasses on, because there's nothing worse than getting something stuck in your eye!

GLOVES Be it on road or trail, I wear gloves, in case I decide to invest in some ground. If you crash you'll probably try to protect yourself with your hands, so gloves will save you from losing skin. I also find that I have better grip on my handlebars when wearing gloves, so I'm more in control of my steering.

ENERGY BAR, PHONE AND MONEY You need some insurance in case the wall you hit doing intervals is just too big to get through, and you need cash for a Coke or two before making your way home. You also don't want to be the one who can't cash up when the group stops for coffee.

SADDLEBAG Inside I carry a tube, tyre levers, multi-tool and CO2 canister. Also, it's good to have some sort of identification on you or somewhere on your bike, in case of an accident.

These are the basics you should never leave home without. Happy training! **B**



Cherise Stander races for Team RECM, and represented South Africa at the 2014 Commonwealth Games.

HEALTH

Is What's In Your Bottle Really Hydrating You?

How, when, and what you drink may be dehydrating your body.

BY MOLLY HURFORD



First things first: hydration and fluid absorption are not the same thing. Drinking lots of water doesn't mean your body will use all of it, explains Dr Stacy Sims, founder of Osmo Nutrition. "Fluid absorption is drinking something and pulling that fluid into your different body water 'compartments,'" she says. "Being hydrated means that you have all your compartments at an even balance."

If you're not hydrating, you're just giving yourself more reason to pee.

While we are made up mostly of water, none of it is plain H₂O. So for proper hydration, your drink needs to have the right mix of water and electrolytes.

"Primarily, you need sodium and a bit of glucose in a drink," says Sims.

But this doesn't mean you should opt for kilojoule-laden sports drinks. "You should never be looking at your drink as a kilojoule source. You'll end up pulling water from other places to dilute it – essentially, dehydrating yourself in the process," she explains.

Drink water with a pinch of sea salt throughout the day, especially before a ride. According to Sims, this actually facilitates the fluid being absorbed, "because you don't have to pull sodium from other places into the intestines for absorption. It's already right there."



NEW STUFF

THE APPLE WATCH

The Apple watch may seem like more of a fashion statement than an essential gadget. But that's only until you find it's easier to dictate messages and control music without having to reach into your pocket for your phone. You can check messages and interact with Siri, but it's also a vehicle for Strava and MapMyRide. Another neat trick it has is to let you transmit your heart rate to another user, which they can then feel via their own watch. It also comes in a range of different strap materials, including rubber, stainless steel and Italian leather. takealot.co.za, R8 499 for 38mm screen, R9 999 for 42mm screen. – AV **B**



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Eat Well, Ride Happy

2011 Chef of the Year David Higgs, head chef for MTN-Qhubeka at the 2015 Tour de France, shares advice for lifting spirits – and performance – with a healthy meal.

BY ANDRÉ VALENTINE

LEKKER LOCAL
MTN-Qhubeka head chef David Higgs prepares some proudly SA boerewors and beef patties at the end of the final stage of the 2015 Tour de France.

When the MTN-Qhubeka guys had a tough day during the Team Time Trial at the Tour de France, team chef David Higgs could think of only one way to cheer them up. “The team arrived at the Pyrenees after a long trip and a bad experience during the time trial, and looked dejected,” says Higgs. “So I thought quickly, and asked the hotel chef if he had any meat.”

Luckily, the chef specialised in *côte de bœuf* (basically, monster steaks), so Higgs acquired a few and cooked them up for the boys. “The change of expression when they saw their dinner was one of the highlights of the Tour for me. Within minutes the guys were

laughing and chatting, their spirits lifted.”

Higgs believes the power of a meal goes beyond nutritional value; sometimes it’s good to eat just for the sake of morale. Here’s how to cook yourself the perfect cycling-friendly steak, to lift your spirits after a tough day... on or off the bike.

WHY STEAK?

“Steak is a high-protein, low-carb meal, perfect for recovery after a long day on the bike. It’s also easy on the eye, and looks tasty. When I made those steaks for the team I used as few ingredients as possible, because everyone on the team has their own taste. Also, simple ingredients aid digestion, while still making a great-tasting meal.”

THE RECIPE BOOK

CÔTE DE BOUEF

INGREDIENTS

Steak
Sea salt
Olive oil
Fresh rosemary

METHOD

Break up the rosemary and put it into a small bowl of olive oil. About an hour before cooking, brush the olive oil mixture onto the steak and let it marinate. When you’re ready to roll, sprinkle on sea salt, and fry quickly. Allow to rest for a minute or two before serving. NB! On the day, Higgs made the team’s steaks on a wood fire, so this recipe would be perfect for a braai.

OTHER TEAM FAVOURITES

Higgs had his plate full, as all the riders in the culturally diverse MTN-Qhubeka team had their own meal preferences.

Breakfast was identified as the important meal for the day, the guys eating between 9 and 10am, then riding at about 1pm. Tyler Farrar loves buckwheat pancakes, and wanted those before the big stages. Quark, a type of

high-protein, low-fat cottage cheese, was a regular too. Other breakfast favourites were omelettes and oats.

Jacques Janse van Rensburg loves salmon, and Serge Pauwels and Edvald Boasson Hagen stuck to a diet of rice and protein.

At the end of the day, desserts always went down a treat – Louis Meintjes loves his apple crumble, and Boasson Hagen his vanilla ice cream.

HIGGS’ TOP TIPS

WHILE THE STEAK WAS ALL ABOUT LIFTING SPIRITS, OVERALL, DAVID HIGGS STILL HAD TO COOK FOR PERFORMANCE. HERE, HE SHARES SOME OF THE KEY STRATEGIES THAT KEPT MTN-QHUBEKA IN TIP-TOP SHAPE.

When juicing, consume as quickly as possible, to get maximum benefit – within five minutes of juicing.

Don’t rinse rice or pasta. The starch you’re washing away is what you need to keep you going on the bike.

If you’re doing a stage race, go high-GI as soon as you finish a stage, to instantly top up glycogen stores. Combine high-GI with low-GI in the evening to top yourself up and keep you satiated through the night.

Don’t underestimate the role a good plate of food can play in improving morale. Looks good, tastes good, is good.

When using olive oil, make sure it’s pure and that it’s first-press – and preferably cold-pressed. This ensures that you get the maximum nutritional and flavour value out of it.

Cook food as close to fresh as possible. Extended periods left standing, at cold temperatures, lead to loss of nutrients.

If you’re on a recovery day, spoil yourself with a good steak or lamb shank.



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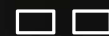
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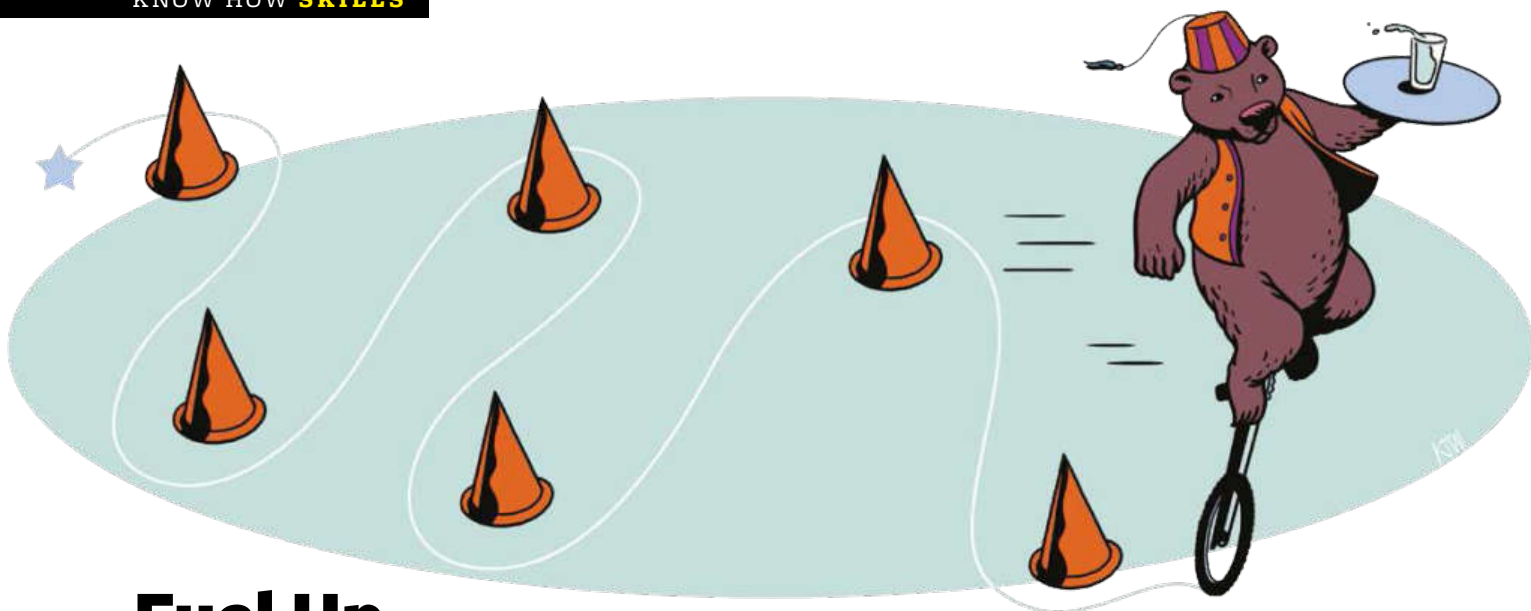
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Fuel Up Without Slowing Down

Hungry? Don't wait until you can pull off to the side of the road. These six tips from elite-level coach Jill Gass will help you eat and drink on the go.

► Do your prep.

Before you leave home, open the packaging on your bars, but leave the gels intact. Place snacks in the pocket closest to your preferred grabbing hand.

► Choose the right bottle cage.

You want one that releases easily so you're not playing tug-of-war just to have a drink. (We

like the classic R45, no-BS Ryder Alloy Bottle Cage; it's secure, but a bottle slides in and out of it easily.)

► Think about what's coming up.

If there's a descent, sharp turn, or climb in your immediate path, wait to refuel. Also, if you're in a pack, common courtesy is to float to the

back to do the business.

► Get a grip.

When you're ready, move your steering hand from the hood to the flat part of the bar, next to the stem, where you'll have maximum stability.

► Drink steadily.

Take quick swigs about every 20 minutes, instead

of waiting so long in between that you have to have a minute-long down-down to quench your thirst.

► Use your body.

You don't need to ride no-handed to crush a gel, but it does look cool. Use the drill below to practise steering with your core instead of your hands.

– AC Shilton

NO-HANDS DRILL

Set up six cones, spaced about two metres apart. (Use rocks or halved tennis balls if you don't have cones.) Weave around the cones on your bike with your hands on the bar, but focus on driving through the turns with your core muscles and hips – it feels a bit like skiing, says Gass. Gradually reduce your reliance on your hands. Practise for five to 10 minutes once a week. You should be able to rely on your core to steer after a matter of weeks. Your goal? Get to the point of navigating the chicane hands-free.

ASK AN EXPERT



Q/A

What's the best way to recover if I rub wheels with another rider in a paceline? First off,

stay calm – most accidents happen because riders panic once contact is made, says Brian Walton, an Olympic track cyclist. Your first instinct may be to quickly pull the bike away from the rub. But sudden movements like jerking your front wheel left or right, stomping on your pedals, or grabbing your brakes can lead to a chain reaction when riding in a group, possibly causing others to crash as well. Leaning into the contact is also a no-no. Instead, says Walton, keep your body loose to absorb some of the impact. Then just take it easy, stop pedalling for a moment or two, and calmly let the rider you're bumping against drift away from you.

KYLE T. WEBSTER

▶ FOIL



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Pedalling Perfection

BY DR JEROEN SWART

Q DURING THE TOUR DE FRANCE IN JULY, THERE WERE LOTS OF ARTICLES REVIEWING THE PROS' BIKES. I SAW SOME OF THEM USING THESE NEW SYSTEMS THAT ANALYSE YOUR PEDAL STROKE. IS THIS WORTH GETTING FOR MYSELF? – *Angie, PMB.*



A We've seen an explosion of new electronic gadgets in the last few years. A big area of development is the new power-measuring pedals, and systems that analyse the data generated by these units. There are also systems that measure some of the same data at the level of the crank, such as the new Pioneer cranks and their display unit. These devices can measure the power being produced by each leg, the roundness of the pedal stroke, and with the Pioneer unit, even the direction of force, and how much of the force is being applied in a direction that is effective.

Left/right balance measurement has been around for some time in the form of the Computrainer Spinscan, Wattbike and SRM ergometers. All athletes have some difference in power output between their left and right leg at submaximal powers (below 70% of peak power). The dominant leg can do as much as 5% more work than the non-dominant one.

Is this a problem? We don't know. What we know is that when you get tired, and when you work harder than 70% of peak power, the difference tends to disappear.

So your pedal stroke becomes more even under stress. However, there seems to be no benefit in trying to increase the strength in the 'weaker' leg.

oxygen for the same power output as before. This is because pedalling in a round fashion creates a lot of wasted force, as the muscles used during the upstroke apply force to the

“ A rounder pedal stroke actually reduced economy.

The roundness of the pedal stroke and the direction-of-force applications are a little trickier. There have been attempts to improve the roundness of a cyclist's pedalling action. This means using the gluteals, hamstrings and calf muscles more, and not just 'stomping' on the pedals, as amateur cyclists tend to do. A while back, many professionals were using de-coupled cranks; a set of cranks where each arm rotates independently, forcing the rider to pull the pedal back up and over the top of the pedal stroke. Despite these cranks improving the roundness of the pedalling action, this had no effect on short-duration power production. In fact, a rounder pedal stroke actually reduced the economy of the rider – in other words, they consumed more

crank's long axis at angles other than a right angle. This way, some of the force is being used to try to lengthen or compress the solid crank, wasting energy.

The invention of systems that measure how much *effective* force a rider is producing is interesting; and they may have performance benefits. However, as yet no research has been conducted to see if there is any merit in this technology; until that research is done, cyclists using these systems are simply taking a chance – one that may have benefit, but which could also negatively impact their performance.

Technology has advanced faster than our ability to understand it. We'll need to wait patiently while the scientists work this one out. **B**

DOCTOR'S ORDERS



Dr Jeroen Swart is a sports physician and exercise physiologist at the Sports Science Institute of South Africa.

WATER INTOXICATION

We often hear about the risks of dehydration, but drinking too much has killed more people in endurance sports than dehydration. The recent death of a competitor at Ironman Frankfurt highlights this issue. Drinking excessively results in a dilution of your blood sodium concentration (known as hyponatraemia), which can result in swelling of the brain, leading to headaches, confusion, irritation, seizures and death. Smaller, slower athletes are most at risk. New guidelines state you should drink to thirst, or otherwise limit your drinking to under 800ml an hour. Drink sodium-rich fluids as well. If you're still hot, pour water over your head rather than drinking more.

DOLLAR PHOTO CLUB



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WE BELIEVE IN BIKES.



What Your Spine Wishes You Knew

How to banish lower-back pain so you can pedal with more power **BY IAN MCMAHAN**

Percentage of recreational cyclists who experience cycling-related lower-back pain:

30^{TO} 50

2.8 factor by which sitting slumped forward

increases pressure on the lower back, compared with standing. Planted in front of a computer all day? Save your spine: ❶ Avoid slouching in your chair ❷ Get a standing desk ❸ Take frequent standing or walking breaks

TWO MOVES TO BEEF UP YOUR BACK



STABILITY BALL SUPERMAN

Lie on your belly on a stability/Pilates ball. With your toes supporting you, extend your arms out in front, forming a straight line from heels to head, back straight. Hold for 45 to 60 seconds, then release. Repeat two more times.



SIDE PLANK

Lie on your right side with your legs straight and upper body propped on your right forearm, elbow under shoulder. Lift your hips until your body forms a straight line from shoulders to ankles. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds. Do three on each side.

ONE
IN
FIVE

PROFESSIONAL CYCLISTS CITE LOWER-BACK PAIN AS A REASON FOR COMPROMISED PERFORMANCE

FEND OFF FATIGUE

As it gets tired, your back tends to round and move from side to side more, straining the muscles and ligaments and wearing down disks. Strengthen your back with the exercises on the right.

A Better Fit 3 ways a professional bike fitter might help ease lower-back pain:

Level your saddle

Decrease cockpit length with a shorter stem or smaller handlebar

Minimise saddle-to-handlebar drop by adding spacers or adjusting your stem



During a two-hour ride, cyclists with a history of lower-back pain spend an average of 46 minutes with their lower backs excessively rounded, compared with 5 minutes for those who don't report lower-back pain. **SOLUTION** *Engage your back muscles and rotate your pelvis towards the top tube to ride with a flat or neutral back.*

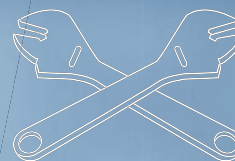


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Master The Taper

RACING SOON, BUT FEELING STALE? YOU CAN CHANGE THAT.

BY MARK CARROLL



Your ‘A’ race is approaching, and your training’s been solid and consistent, six to 10 hours a week – now, tapering is the key to reaping the rewards from that training.

What you need to consider is how many days to taper for, training intensity for the taper, training volume, the type of event you’re tapering for, and nutritional strategies.

Experience is valuable in tapering – there’s no single one-size-fits-all strategy, and uncontrollable factors such as a stressful lifestyle and restless sleep may require a more aggressive taper. Even for the same individual, the taper strategy that worked perfectly before may not be as effective next time round. However, this guide will highlight factors to be aware of, so your taper can be adjusted to help you peak for

your race effectively.

TAPER DURATION

The general rule is eight to 14 days, with the length of the taper depending on the following considerations:

- How fast do you recover generally? The faster you recover, the less time you require for tapering.
- What level of accumulated fatigue do you have? Has lethargy set in, along with persistently sore and tired legs? If so, a longer duration will be needed.
- High levels of stress at work will also require a longer taper.

Something to remember is that prioritising races is important. If your calendar has a dozen ‘A’ races, then your whole season will be spent tapering rather than preparing. Treat less important races as

‘train troughs’ to prepare for the races that really matter.

VOLUME AND INTENSITY

Intensity must not reduce during a taper. The only component that reduces during the taper is volume – both weekly total training hours, and the volume of intensity:

- Reduce weekly volume by adding extra recovery days.
- Reduce session volume by doing shorter rides, such as training time and distance.
- Reduce volume of intensity during the taper, in duration of intervals as well as total number. If high-intensity intervals totalled 30 minutes a week during preparation, then aim to halve this volume in the taper. Note that individual differences in fitness and recovery, as well as lifestyle, must be considered here too.

EVENT-SPECIFIC TAPERING

Interestingly, whether the taper is for a three-day stage race, a one-day classic, or a one-hour criterium or track race, the general rules for tapering do not vary, because the goal remains the same – to offload fatigue, increase freshness, and find those extra few percentage-point gains in performance.

WHAT TO EAT DURING THE TAPER

Kilojoules in, kilojoules out still applies. Keep portion size unchanged while cutting back on training for 10 days, and you can expect to gain weight and fat. Note the key here is portion size, not composition of meals; so keep eating the same types of foods, while cutting back on how much is served up.

FINAL NOTE

With experience, mastering the taper will become easier. It is arguably better to be at the start of your ‘A’ race a little over- rather than under-recovered, so don’t be afraid to schedule in extra rest days, and cut your time on training days. **B**

THE COACH



Mark Carroll owns Cadence Cycling Performance & chairs the CSA Coaching Commission.

ENERGY MATTER

If you own a power meter, then you have the perfect tool to help you lose weight – by monitoring kilojoule intake. The formula is actually quite simple: one joule of energy equals one watt of power. If you’re riding at 250 watts, you need to deliver 250 joules of energy per second to the pedals. But note that for every joule you deliver to the bike, you’ve ‘lost’ another three joules metabolising fuels and producing heat. Therefore, at 250 watts, you are actually expending about 1000 joules (1kJ) of energy per second. The rest is simple mathematics...

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PHAT OF A VERY HIGH STANDARD OR QUALITY (SLANG), EG 'THAT'S A PHAT BIKE'. – MSN ONLINE DICTIONARY

Into the Voigt

JENS ALWAYS GETS A GOOD LAUGH – EVEN WHEN HE'S VLOECKING VOECKLER



M

UCH TO THE JOY OF THE REST OF THE WORLD, DURING THE COVERAGE OF THE TOUR DE FRANCE SHOWN ON SUPERSPORT,

JENS VOIGT WAS INCLUDED AS AN ANALYST. Phil Liggett and Paul Sherwen would carry on in their well-drilled way through the day before switching to Voigt – who was standing outside the door of their commentary booth, apparently. We know this because Phil kept telling us so.

“We are crossing to Jens Voigt, who I think is probably standing outside the door of our booth,” said Phil. Voigt never confirmed or denied this. I’d like to think he was sitting at the nearest bar with a beer, and an eye on the television. More than any other rider I’ve watched, I’d like to have a beer with Jens.

On the most magical of days for Africa, when Daniel Teklehaimanot became the first black African to pull on the King of the Mountains jersey, Phil crossed to Jens, who may have been standing outside the door because they wouldn’t let him in. Thomas Voeckler had just attacked on the last climb, his face twisted into that over-dramatic gurn that looks like he’s on the verge of throwing a rather large tantrum. He knows how to work the TV, does Voeckler.

Phil asked Jens about Voeckler’s attack. Was it a good move? “Yes, I think it was a good move,” said Jens, who’s still learning

the commentary ropes and hasn’t yet let out the true Jens we know and love. “It could work for him. He’s well known for doing this, and knows when to go.”

There is a story that Voeckler goes on so many solo attacks because the rest of the bunch don’t like him. But retirement has mellowed Jens; he spoke kindly of Voeckler. He wasn’t as kind during the Team CSC training camp in the Western Cape some years ago.

He was answering a question about the size of the team, and how they formed friendships and partnerships. “The team rides so many races with different riders, so sometimes I don’t see some of the guys for a few months,” said Voigt at a function at Boschendal wine estate. “In one race, I was beaten by Thomas Voeckler. He usually never beats people, but he beat me. The guys I was riding with wouldn’t let me forget it. So, I think it’s over – that’s it. Then the guys

a good laugh when he opens his mouth. We need more of his quotes. We need him to say, “Oh, you poor thing, you’ve got no chance, you’re already beaten.” And “You’re all beaten; I am just laughing at you.” And “I get paid to hurt other people, how good is that?” And “In the hierarchy of the family, I’m just above the dog. But I like it that way.” And “Having things organised is for small-minded people. Genius controls chaos.” And “I am confident that when I get really old, the human lifespan will be extended.”

On that trip to the Western Cape, Jens and Team CSC rode with Cervélo clients and retailers. A colleague who spent much time with the team said that on one of those rides through Muizenberg, Jens stopped and had a lengthy chat with the Shark Spotter. And as happens on a pre-season tour, a few drinks were had, and rumours have been told of a 4.30am pie fight at the Engen on

“ **More than any other rider I’ve watched, I’d like to have a beer with Jens.** ”

I haven’t raced with, I meet them at the next race a month later, and they go, ‘So, you lost to Voeckler?’ And they mock me. Then, at the next race, *more* guys I hadn’t raced with come up to me and go, ‘So, you lost to Voeckler...’ Noooo! Anyone but Vooookler!”

It got a good laugh. Jens usually does get

Orange in Cape Town.

Jens will no doubt say kinder things about his former teammates and rivals than he did when he was a rider. At least, until he warms to TV, and returns to his true self. Perhaps then Phil and Paul will let him in the door of the commentary booth. **B**

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JACK PAROW SE

CUSTOM-SPRAYED MOMSEN BIG GUN

WORDS: OLI MUNNIK | PHOTO: JAMES GARAGHTY



Aweh. 'Die original donker dodgy Afrikaans rapper' known to us as Jack Parow is one of South Africa's wildest characters and most flamboyant entertainers. When it came to scoring a bike, unsurprisingly, he gravitated towards this larger-than-life, custom-sprayed Momen fat bike, to match his funky beats, biltong-flavoured lyrics and eccentric dress sense. *Kwaai, ek sê – laat ons waai.*

TWITTER @JACKPAROW

PARTSE

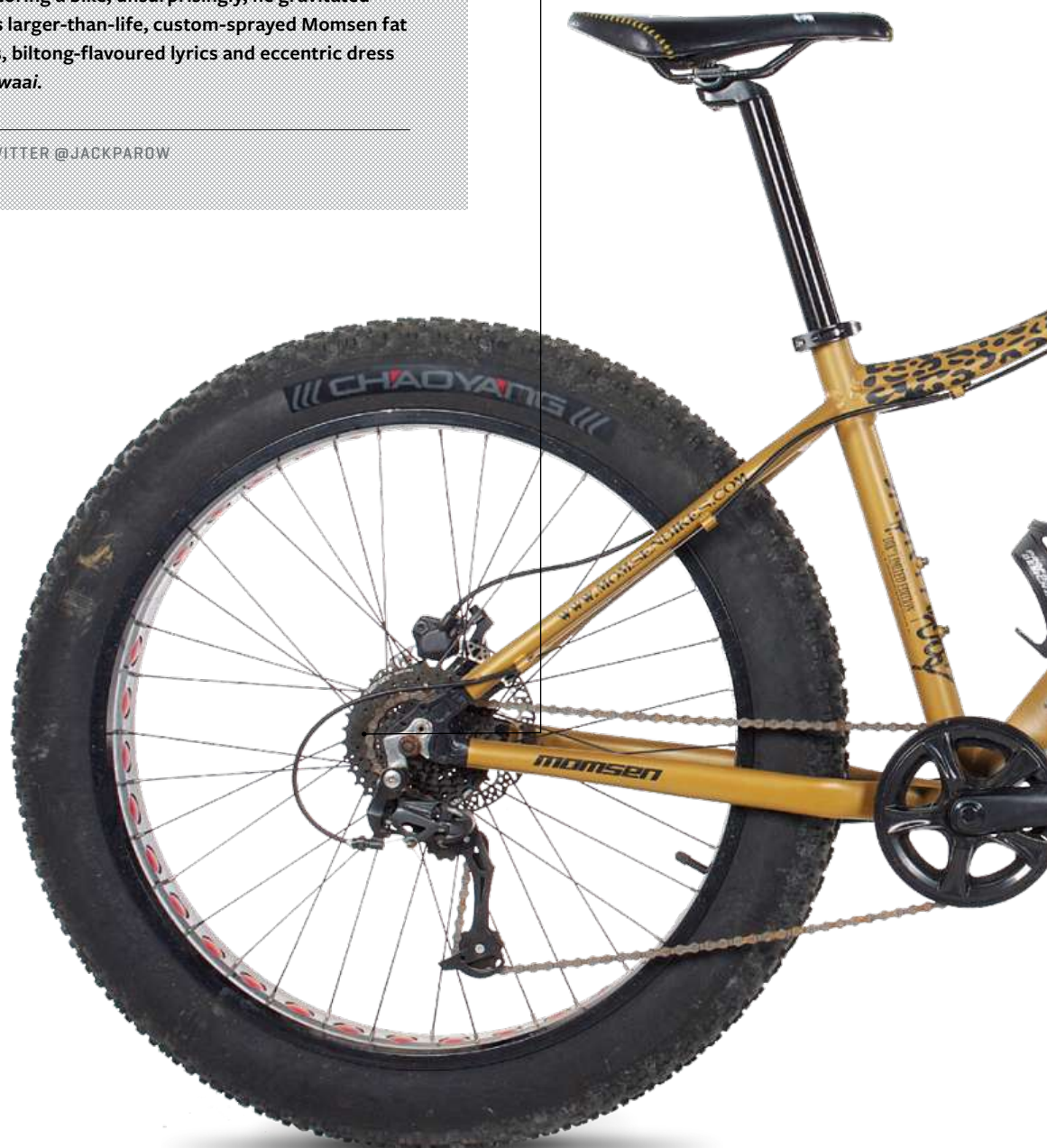
A highlight of the bike is its saddle, which has been re-covered with hand-stitched black leather by Cape Town-based leather restorers Velobrien. Though now faded with use, originally the stitching's colour matched that of the gold paint.

A set of Tektro Auriga brakes ensure wheelies are dialled, while flat pedals give Parow the freedom to jump on and ride wherever he may be.

Interestingly, the handlebar is slightly dented and bent; perhaps the result of a late-night stunt-ride after a few refreshments... which would naturally have been stored in the Profile Design bottle cage. Something along the lines of a Klippies and Coke would suit this Zef-rock star to a T!

DRAAIFTREIN

Parow is clearly *cooler as ekke*, as he's running a 1x set-up! A 36T single ring up front is mated to a nine-speed rear cassette. Shifting is crisp, thanks to a Shimano Acera rear derailleur and trigger shifter. An entry-level Octalink crankset runs on a cartridge bottom bracket.



RAAM [NIE SKAAM]

Beneath Parow's custom artwork lies an alloy Momen Big Gun fat-bike frame, and matching disc-specific alloy fork. While the frame is stock standard, the black-and-gold paintjob and Jack Parow-inspired decals are anything but. They were carefully applied by Cape Town-based Bogus Designs.

The top tube's leopard-print design celebrates Parow's trademark peak cap, which sports a ludicrously long peak, and is – you guessed it – covered in leopard print. The seat tube is emblazoned with his name, and has a peak cap and octopus incorporated into the design. The frame's down tube features the (very South African) wording "Dik" Limited Edition HOS JA!", followed by another peak cap. Various Momen logos complete the, um, somewhat unusual look.

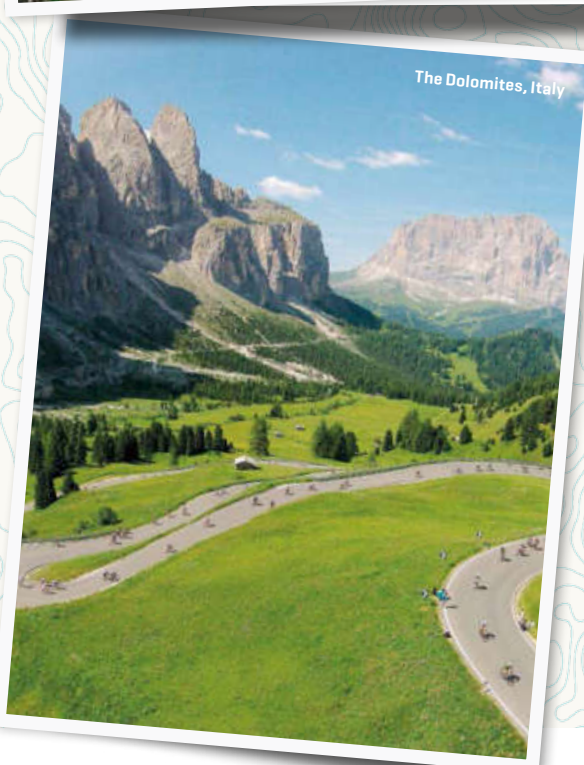
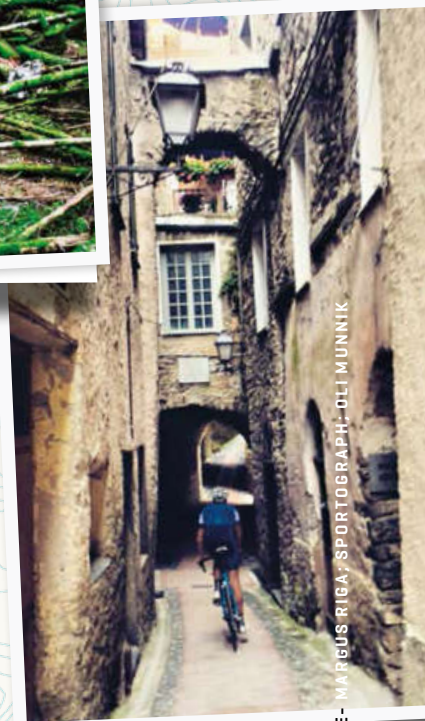
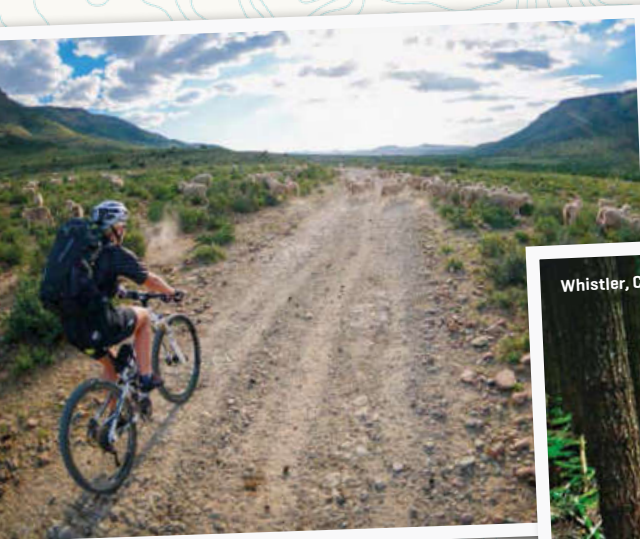


WIELE EN GOED

There's no shortage of grip, thanks to a set of 26"x4.0" Chaoryang tyres. They feature low-profile, aggressively-shaped knobs that spread over the shoulder of the sidewall, providing a massive contact patch. Grip will come in handy for any on-stage antics, or if Parow needs to escape rapidly from a gang of hooligan fans (or Leon Schuster) while riding along the Sea Point promenade.

The 36-hole, 26"x90mm alloy rims feature circular cut-outs to reduce weight. Front and rear hubs are super-wide, and built to fit the 190mm rear-end spacing and 135mm fork spacing snugly. **B**

Why You Need a Bucket List



It's mostly in our private moments, and with our close friends, that we talk about our dreams. The places we want to ride, the things we long to see. We write them down. Tuck them away. And, if we're lucky, we tick them off.

Our collective bucket lists save us from the monotony of everyday life.

It's when I'm riding the same lonely loop at home that I envision Whistler MTB park, which has become one of the best mountain bike venues in the world with its mix of technical singletrack and flowing trails.

Whenever the glare of the computer screen begins to blur my vision, I think about Alpe D'Huez, all 21 hairpin bends, grinding up or flying down.

And it's between nappy changes and harried meals and never-ending household chores that I promise myself: one day, my wife and I will ride the Freedom Challenge Race Across South Africa – it's just the adventure we need to get away and find ourselves again. – **IAN DILLE**

WHAT'S ON YOUR BUCKET LIST?

Why not add Gear Ed Oli Munnik's fabulous trip to Liguria and Lake Garda in Italy? See p57 for details.

ANDREW KING; BC BIKE RACE; MARGUS RIGA; SPORTOGRAPH; OLI MUNNIK

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BOOKS ON BIKES



IN THE LOOSE: Bok legend Butch James launches a Shark attack on Natal rugby stalwart John 'Slugger' Slade. Many ex-rugby stars have become diehard mountain bikers.



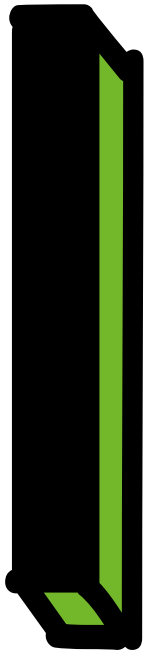
Cycling is the new golf. Perhaps. Though we must say, we haven't seen Tiger Woods or Ernie Els exchanging their four-irons for two-wheelers. However, a hell of a lot of top rugby players have swapped rucks for rocks, hospital passes for mountain passes, and drop-kicks for drop-offs. Cycling isn't the new golf – it's the new rugby. Jonathan Ancer wonders what makes so many former rugby players ruck and roll.

WORDS

JONATHAN ANCER

IMAGES

KEVIN SAWYER &
CAPE EPIC/SPORTZPICS



It was an amazing sight: 116kg of beefy, bulky Colin Charvis, crossing the finish line on one of the toughest days in the history of the planet's toughest mountain-bike stage-race. It was Stage 1 of the 2013 edition of the Absa Cape Epic – a day that saw some seasoned mountain bikers go to some very dark places. Charvis, the former Welsh rugby captain, had partnered with Okkert Brits, SA's most famous pole-vaulter. The gruelling 100km ride had taken riders over vicious technical sections, and through more sand than you'll find in the Kalahari. Brits, who regularly launches himself six metres in the air, showed he could go high, but not far. He didn't make the day's cut-off – and Charvis was left to ride on his own.

Brits came up short. There's no shame in bailing – the bar for completing the Epic is very, very high. Besides, he's in good company. In 2009, Bafana Bafana star Mark Fish was taken out on Stage 3, due to blisters on his feet and cuts on his heels. By the time the doctors arrived, Fish was fried. The chips were down. (Fish may not have been hooked on cycling, but he took the bait. "I'll be back next year, and I'll be more prepared." And true to his word, he returned in 2010 and finished.)

MTB attracts athletes from all sports; racing car driver Gugu Zulu and Comrades legend Bob de la Motte have both completed the Epic, and cricketering guru Gary Kirsten has been spotted on the slopes of Table Mountain, doing to the singletrack what he did to the Australian bowling attack – carving it up.

But these are just individual athletes, from a variety of sporting disciplines. Rugby players, however, are drawn to mountain biking like, well, South Africans are drawn to rugby. In their droves. And most of the former players taking up the sport are massive, prop-like behemoths.

The cream of South African rugby is getting their thrills on two wheels: people like Joel Stransky, Butch James, Marius Hurter, John Smit, John Slade, Jeremy Thomson, Victor Matfield, Corné Krige, Tiaan Strauss, Chester Williams, Stefan Terblanche, Robbie Kempson, Andrew Paterson and Breyton Paulse. Rugby royalty, the lot of them: they could give the current All Blacks a scrum for their money.

But what is it about cycling that attracts these big men in their, er, second phase of sporting life? According to former Bok captain John Smit, the appeal lies in "feeding the competitive monster", and being part of a team again.

When you pull on the gold and green jersey to represent South Africa, you get a cap; when you pull off an Epic, you

get a finisher's T-shirt.

Smit has 111 Bok caps under his... uh, belt? And two Epic T-shirts.

"We experience the same kind of camaraderie at the Epic that we did on the field," he says. And he adds that mountain biking is similar to rugby, in that both stimulate camaraderie, and – when the whistle blows, and you cross the line after a tough day – satisfaction, too.

Smit says he loves the sport for the adrenaline. "Besides, I've never seen a runner with a smile on his face."

For John 'Slugger' Slade – the man who introduced Smit to bicycles three years ago – cycling is not so much about the competition; it's about life.

Or to put it another way: it's about giving death the middle finger. After Slade gave up rugby in 2003 (he represented Natal in 101 games), he ate for eight months straight and did no exercise. On 1 February 2004, he sat down to have lunch – and should have been dead 15 minutes later: he had a heart attack.

"When I recovered, my doctor told me I'd better do some exercise, and suggested cycling. I got into road cycling, and it saved my life." Slade started off as a roadie, but graduated to MTB; and in 2009, he rode the Epic, with his brother.

He agrees with Smit that former players are very competitive – and says the most competitive of all is the erstwhile Bok skipper. "Everyone wants to beat everyone else, especially John Smit."

THERE'S LESS IMPACT ON YOUR JOINTS, WHICH IS SOMETHING YOU WELCOME AFTER HAVING BEEN BASHED AROUND A RUGBY FIELD FOR 15 YEARS.

Besides, he adds, rugby players know how to hurt. (Of course they do. Kamp Staaldraad, anyone?)

Slade says any top sportsman can transfer his skills to MTB – but for big guys, mountain biking is a release. "There's less impact on your joints, which is something you welcome after having been bashed around a rugby field for 15 years. Which is not to say that the Epic is easy – even compared with a hard rugby game, it's one helluva tough race," he says.

He adds that former rugby players do well in cycling because they're not scared to put in the hard yards. Rugby and mountain biking both require hard work to get results. "There are no short cuts – you have to train hard."

According to Slade, when you're playing rugby, your mind has to be strong, and it's the same with MTB. "When things get tough and your arse is sore, you keep going. A rugby game lasts 80 minutes, a day at the Epic lasts eight hours – but in the 80 minutes, the intensity is, well... intense. A day at the

Epic is all about endurance.”

Slade returned to the Epic this year to ride with former Bok flyhalf and centre Butch James. “We trained 10 to 12 hours a week, and then some big weeks of 20 hours’ riding, with lots of hills. We were prepared.”

While the bigger guys have an advantage on the rugby field, on the climbs the pendulum swings back to the lighter guys.

“Us 110kg blokes slog hard uphill, and we can only watch the smaller oaks – like 80kg Joel Stransky – sailing up,” says Slade.

A decade after his heart attack, Slade says cycling has given him a second lease on life. “I can enjoy a couple of beers and burgers. I have an annual check-up, and I’ve got a clean bill of health – no more issues.”

For Slade, cycling is about health, competition, camaraderie and family: it’s the whole package. “I can ride with my wife – we did the Berg & Bush – and I can ride with my son and daughter on the beachfront.”

Slade wanted to return to the Epic, so he approached Butch James to ride with him in 2015.

“He timed it well,” says James (42 caps; 2 T-shirts). “When you’re on the route, you don’t think about doing it again; but John asked me the week after the race had finished, and I was missing the vibe. You get caught up in the excitement of the event.”

After his first Epic, James lived up to his nickname by stating that the race wasn’t that tough. “I got into a bit of trouble for saying that; but everyone had told me I was crazy to enter such a tough race, and I thought I’d die out there. So when I actually made it, I was surprised. Anyway, I suffered for saying that, because this year there were no free kilometres!”

James says his body – especially his knees – took a beating during his rugby years, but mountain biking has less impact on the joints. “My knees don’t allow me to do much other exercise, so I like to mountain bike to keep fit. But I do love the technical aspect of riding, especially downhills and singletrack.”

James says he’s lazy during winter, and it’s only in December that his training kicks in. “This year though, I’ve decided to start early. In fact, straight after this interview I’m going to get on my Wattbike.”

But why are riders coming more from rugby rather than, say, cricket?

“Cricketers are already skinny,” says James. “Rugby players like good meals and a few beers;



GRUBBER TO RUBBER: John Slade and Butch James keep in touch.

and if we don't exercise, we look like props," he adds.

So you have to give props to the bigger rugby players – Sherman Tank-like men, with tree-trunk thighs. Men like Marius Hurter (13 caps; four T-shirts) and Don King-lookalike Colin Charvis (94 caps for Wales; one T-shirt) – a formidable pair of goliaths who partnered for the 2015 Epic. With a combined weight of 230kg, they must have been the heaviest pairing in the history of MTB stage racing.

If anyone knows how to hurt, it's Hurter – known as The Hurtinator, and a member of the 1995 World Cup-winning Bok squad. A tighthead prop, Hurter is not built for hills. After retiring from rugby, he started spinning to lose weight, at his local gym; and then bought a Volcan FS2 to use at home. And then cracked the rear stay. "That piece was made of carbon. So from then on, it was aluminium all the way!"

He says rugby gives him an edge in cycling, in terms of perseverance, will power, cutting out fatigue and powering through pain. "Races like the Epic will mess with your mind; and if you're not in touch with your physical limits and mental strength, you'll get caught out."

When Hurter hung up his boots, he weighed 130kg, and could pass pro rider Darren Lill – not pass him on a bike, but actually pass him, like a rugby ball. Lill is 59kg, less than half Hurter's weight.

At the 2015 Epic, every morning I'd watch the skinny pros race across the finish line of the day's stage. Then I'd return five hours later, to see the enormous pair tough it out with the other backmarkers. Hurter (who has lost 27kg since he took up riding) and Charvis would crawl over



TOP: Once Joel Stransky got his kicks on the rugby field – now he gets them bombing down singletrack.

MIDDLE: Cycling feeds ex-Bok skipper John Smit's competitive monster.

BOTTOM Rugby has taught Bok behemoth Marius Hurter how to vasbyt – useful during a tough day in the saddle (and when queueing at the portaloos before a race).

the line, with minutes to spare.

On Stage 3, after nine hours and 55 minutes of saddle time, the heavyweight champs were the ninth-last team to cross the line, making the (extended) cut-off by just four minutes. I asked Charvis what had got him to the finish line.

"Marius!" he gasped.

In turn, Hurter said it was Charvis who'd got him through the stage.

"Colin and I are both from competitive backgrounds. If I look at him, I can see the determination. We don't have to say much; there's a whole lot that's said with just one sentence – we know what to do, we back each other, and we drag each other to the line."

Charvis was broken that day. There wasn't much in the tank. But the duo soldiered on. The next day, they were second-last to cross the line. But on the second-last stage, with the clock ticking down, they were nowhere to be seen. 10...

HE LIMPED OFF SILENTLY, WITH A DARK LOOK IN HIS EYES.

9... 8... I looked up, expecting to see them speeding to the finish, bunnyhopping over the line with a second to spare.

7... 6... 5... The commissaire stepped forward to fire the gun. 4... 3... 2... 1... Bang! That was it. The race was over. And 20 seconds later, Hurter crossed the line. He was devastated.

Charvis had been ill from day 4, and wasn't feeling sharp. "He was on a drip on the night of Stage 5. Stage 6 was just a long, gruelling ride, and we were very slow. In the last few climbs before the downhill into Wellington (about 10km out), I had to go, and see if I could still make it. But as I approached the finish, I could see no-one was encouraging any more; and I knew then that I was late."

Charvis came in about 10 minutes later. He limped off silently, with a dark look in his eyes. The final whistle had blown, and now it was injury time.

Hurter says rugby has taught him how

to *vasbyt* when things aren't going his way. "Yes, we're slightly heavier than the normal Tour de France race horse – but when we enter races we know we're not going to finish on the podium. It's about participating and enjoying cycling, with people you know. There's generally a great vibe at races, which I enjoy, and it's nice to do the races with ex-teammates... and we're all still very competitive, but only in our weight class!"

A former Bok who *is* competitive is Joel 'That Kick' Stransky, who has six Epics and a coveted Cape Town Cycle Tour sub-three to go with his 1995 World Cup-winning medal and 22 Bok caps.

According to Stransky, what makes MTB an incredible sport is that you ride in areas and on routes you wouldn't otherwise be privileged to see and enjoy.

"Rugby training has an element of suffering – and cycling's all about suffering and digging deep," he says,

adding that cycling is tougher from an endurance point of view; not so much in terms of contact (unless you eat gravel, as Stransky did earlier this year – in a crash that broke his collarbone).

But that's where rugby players come into their own. "You take a physical hammering, but you get up and continue, and endure. Rugby teaches you to be mentally tough. Your body can go much longer than you think it can – the mind controls the body, and can push it to places it doesn't want to go. Rugby players know that – they train for that – and that's why they are able to take a big hit, and get up and go on to take the next hit."

He says that forwards take pain for 80 minutes, so when they suffer a bit on a hill, it's nothing. So what's tougher, 80 minutes against the All Blacks, or a day at the Epic? "A day at the Epic, because it's outside our comfort zone, and the

DICTIONARY

There are many parallels between cycling and rugby, but sometimes terms get lost in translation...

FULLBACK (FOOL BACK)

Rugby The last line of defence between your opponents and the try line

Cycling The guy behind you shouting "track, track!" – and after you let him through, he creates a bottleneck at the first bit of technical trail

IN TOUCH

Rugby when the ball is kicked into touch without first

Cycling when you're in the bunch, and the guy in front of you brakes suddenly

ON THE FULL

Rugby when the ball is kicked into touch without first bouncing inside the field of play, it's been kicked out 'on the full'

Cycling when you decide not to ride your hardtail and go out on your dual-sus MTB instead, you are 'on the full'

TRAIL

Rugby the worst thing ever, because you're behind on points

Cycling the best thing ever, because it's time to carve up some singletrack

TALLBOY

Cycling Santa Cruz's fast and fun 29er

Rugby Eben Etzebeth

LOCK OUT

Cycling when you disable your bike's suspension to make it rigid

Rugby when Eben Etzebeth gets sent to the sin bin

29ER

Cycling an MTB wheelsize that sparked a war

Rugby A game played with only 29 players, because of a lock out

GIANT

Cycling a reliable, rugged and affordable bike brand

Rugby Kobus Wiese (reliable, rugged... and costly to opponents)

ANTHEM

Rugby what giants sing, with hand on heart, before a Test

Cycling a Giant that tests you, but makes your heart sing

SHOCK DECISION

Rugby Any time a ref's call doesn't go your way (or anything Bryce Lawrence says)

Cycling When you realise it's time to send your suspension fork in for a service

CONVERSION

Rugby two points, from a kick through the posts after a try

Cycling when you puncture-proof your bike by going from tubed to tubeless

UPHILL BATTLE

Rugby when there's a lock out, and Bryce Lawrence is reffing, and you're 15 points behind, and there's two minutes left in the game

Cycling Suikerbossie

CHARGE DOWN

Rugby when an opposition player blocks a kick

Cycling when your Local Bike Shop gives you a discount because you're a regular

CROSS COUNTRY

Cycling an MTB race that mixes different riding types into one course

Rugby Where you live when you lose (especially to Australia in a World Cup quarterfinal – we still hate you, Bryce.)

suffering is much longer,” says Stransky.

He says there’re a lot of rugby players on bikes because it’s a sport of endurance, toughness and pain. “Cricketers don’t do fitness to the point of enduring pain; and although soccer players are stretched physically, they don’t take pain constantly for 80 minutes.”

Dr Mike Posthumus, exercise scientist at the Sports Science Institute and a cycling coach at Science2Sport, says former rugby players love cycling because they’re used to high training loads and being active. On retirement, they look for a cocktail of adventure, physical activity and being around mates – everything they used to get from rugby. They find it in cycling; especially MTB, and specifically multi-stage events.

Posthumus should know. He’s a former Western Province A loosehead prop turned MTB zealot. “Everyone loves a challenge – none more so than a rugby player,” he says.

As a rugby player, Posthumus’ fighting weight was 120kg. But since he gave up the oval ball in 2010, he’s dropped 30 kilos. “In rugby I had to be as heavy as possible, so I spent a lot of time in the gym building muscle. I realised that if I wanted to ride fast – and I did – I had to lose weight.” He has two Epics under his belt, finishing in the top 30 this year – and he plans to mix it up with the pros in the top 20 in 2016.

He says rugby players aren’t fast (“except Stransky – but he doesn’t count, because he’s a back-liner”), but the playing field is levelled when things get long and tough. “In endurance events and marathons, it’s less about speed and more about having the ability to suffer,” he says.

And he points out that rugby players come into mountain biking with a big advantage: massive quads. “What makes John Smit outclimb his peers at the back of the pack is that he has enormous quads, and can generate a large amount of torque. He can put a lot of force through the pedals – and of course he has strength endurance, which helps.”

EVERYONE LOVES A CHALLENGE – NONE MORE SO THAN A RUGBY PLAYER.

But it’s quad pro quo – mountain biking also helps rugby. Victor Matfield went from Bok to bike and back to Bok again; Posthumus says that while rugby benefited Matfield’s mountain biking, mountain biking will benefit his rugby, because of the cardiovascular fitness benefits.

But sometimes, boks and biking don’t mix. Ask Evan van der Spuy, whose collision with a red hartebees went viral on YouTube in 2011. Van der Spuy – who was concussed, and suffered minor whiplash – made light of the incident afterwards, describing himself as #BuckNorris. Of course, he’s not a rugby player – if the buck had hit Marius Hurter, the hartebees would have been concussed.

And Hurter would have been #BokNorris. **B**



Butch James caused a stir after his first Epic – for saying it “wasn’t that tough”.

TIPS FOR PLUS SIZE RIDERS

It’s not only the front-rowers joining the baggie brigade – plus-size riders from all walks of life are hopping onto bikes. Here’s some advice from Dr Mike Posthumus (exercise scientist at the Sports Science Institute and a cycling coach at Science2Sport) for riders in the 100kg+ club.



COMFORT IS KING

“Opt for a plush dual-suspension bike – when you’re heavy yourself, the weight penalty isn’t as large. Having said that, most bikes these days are robust, and a bike from a reputable dealer is unlikely to let you down.”

FORK OFF

“I’ve ridden several different bikes and forks and really like Cannondale, since I find the Lefty fork extremely stiff. Due to my weight, I find other forks tend to ‘dive’ and flex much more. The double clamp of the Lefty, with a thicker square section, makes it much stiffer.”

WHEELS

“Choose a pair of stiff wheels. A light set of carbons is not the best option.”

PRESSURE MANAGEMENT

“The biggest issue us heavy guys have is that we have to run much higher tyre pressures, to avoid pinching. One way I’ve resolved this is to use wider rims. This allows me to run my pressures slightly lower than I would be able to on a normal-diameter rim. It also allows better performance from my tyres, compared to smaller rim diameters.”

BE A LOSER

“There’s no getting away from it: cycling is still determined by watts per kilogram. If you want to get faster, you need to lose weight. Everyone wants to know how to lose weight, but we all know the answer: train more, eat less. And drink less beer.”

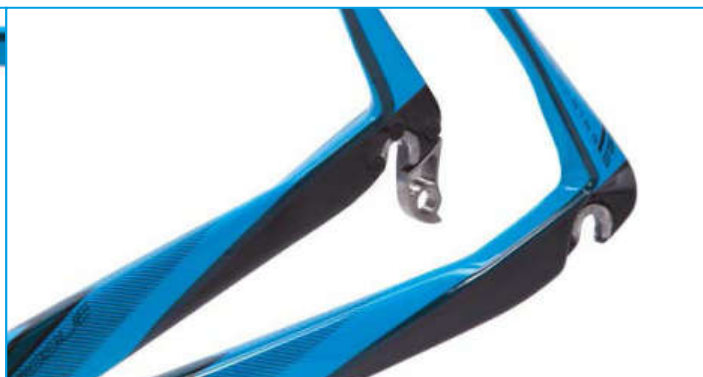
GREAT FEEDBACK FROM THE PROS, VERY LITTLE FROM THE ROAD.



- Ultravox Ti Cyan

■ Tuned seatstays reduce road buzz.

■ Titanium rear derailleur hanger for crisper shifting.



ULTRAVOX Ti

Often the harshest critic of a race bike is the athlete who is paid to race on it. That's why we were delighted (and relieved) when our pro team riders gave the Ultravox a big thumbs up. "Don't change anything!" they said. Of course we didn't listen. We picked their brains, then set to work in tweaking and refining the latest Ultravox to be even more responsive on climbs and in sprints, while still remaining rock-steady at high speeds and handling neutrally in corners. Plus it's tuned to offer control and compliance on the rough road surfaces encountered in World Tour races, and also in your backyard.

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SWIFT
CARBON



PEDALLING FOR PANINIS

STEEPED IN CYCLING
HISTORY, AND ENDOWED WITH
BREATHTAKING SCENERY AND
SOME OF THE WORLD'S
MOST INCREDIBLE ROADS, ITALY
IS AN UNFORGETTABLE COUNTRY
TO EXPERIENCE BY BIKE

WORDS + PICS OLIMUNNIK



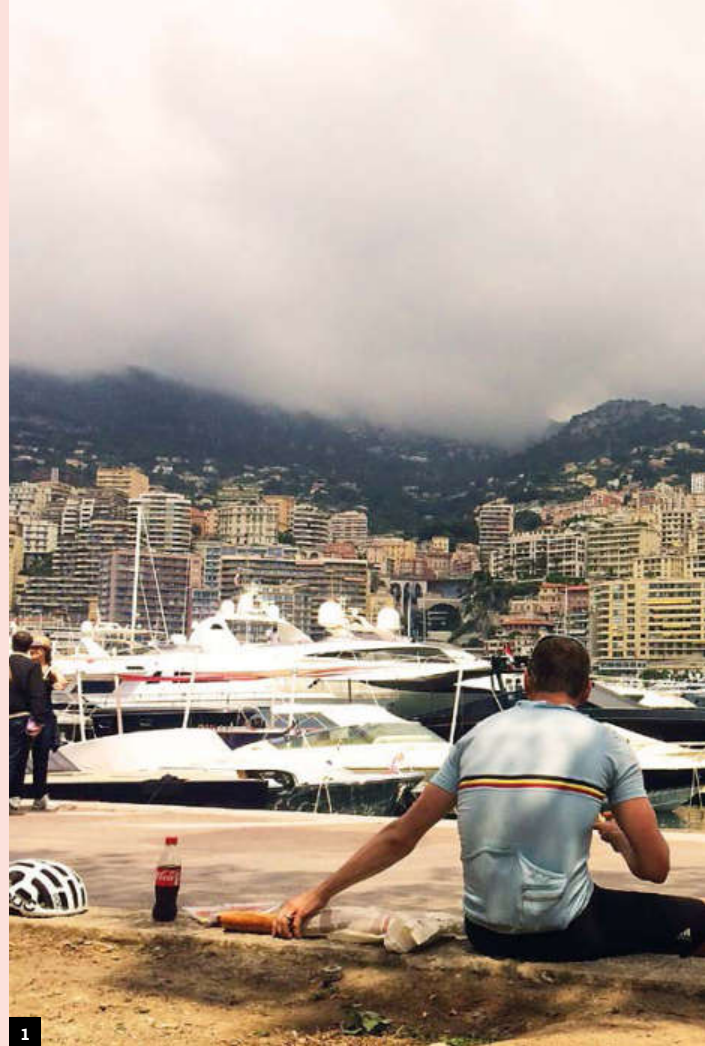
CYCLING FANS THROUGHOUT SOUTH AFRICA HAVE ENJOYED UNPRECEDENTED LEVELS OF LIVE TV COVERAGE OF THE INTERNATIONAL CYCLING SEASON THIS YEAR. FROM ICONIC CLASSICS SUCH AS MILAN-SAN REMO AND PARIS-ROUBAIX TO THE WORLD'S MOST WATCHED SPORTING SPECTACLE - LE TOUR DE FRANCE - WE'VE HAD OUR FILL OF LYCRA-CLAD GLADIATORS BATTLING IT OUT FOR GLORY.

As the pro peloton criss-crosses its way through the European countryside, we're left dreaming: of riding past French fields, teeming with bright yellow sunflowers, through ancient Italian hilltop villages, surviving sections of infamous Belgian *pavé* (cobble) – and of course, throwing down the gauntlet on the mythical Alpine, Dolomite and Pyrenees mountain passes.

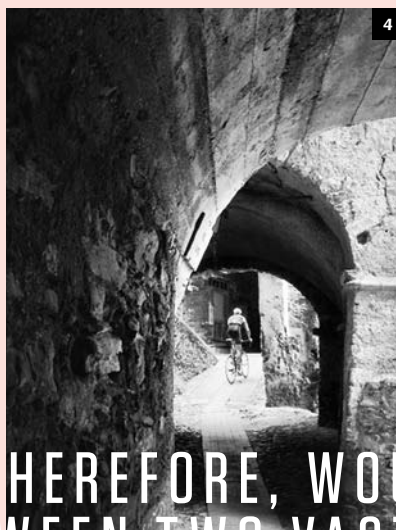
The dream became a reality in June when my cousin Charlie Keey, Big Al 'The Power' Davies (aka The Weapon) and I headed to Europe to ride some of the continent's iconic roads and climbs.

Naturally, the 'holiday of all holidays' was born while necking a few Ammies at The Weapon's palace in Cape Town. As the malted hops quenched our thirst, the plan was decided: the three of us would ease over to Italy, and spend a glorious week racing each other on the rural roads of Liguria, before catching a train and heading north-east to Riva del Garda, on the northern shore of Lake Garda. Here, we'd rendezvous with eleven of our chinas to celebrate a friend's birthday – a second week of high fives and hashtags.

Our adventure, therefore, would be split between two vastly different areas of Italy – sleepy, coastal Liguria, and touristy Lake Garda – both of which would be an absolute dream to experience by bike. Without even realising it, we had snuck two holidays into one... *dis nou slimkrag – nie domkrag nie!*



While San Remo is most famous (in cycling terms) for the finish of the Milan-San Remo, most recently the town hosted the Grand Depart of the 2015 Giro d'Italia, with a spectacular 22km Team Time Trial along a converted railway line. Heading home, we rode the pan-flat course, which features a great surface - and a few (former train) tunnels. Dimly lit, these tunnels must have tested the pros' nerves as they hurtled through them at over 60km/h. Only in Italy! ▶



Chowing paninis in glitzy Monte Carlo (1), riding through ancient Ligurian villages (2, 3 & 4), high above Lake Garda on a gravel path (5), through converted train tunnels (6), then up and over the Milan-San Remo's infamous Poggio climb (7)... our time in Italy couldn't have been more varied.

OUR ADVENTURE, THEREFORE, WOULD BE SPLIT BETWEEN TWO VASTLY DIFFERENT AREAS OF ITALY – SLEEPY, COASTAL LIGURIA, AND TOURISTY LAKE GARDA – BOTH OF WHICH WOULD BE AN ABSOLUTE DREAM TO EXPERIENCE BY BIKE.



CONQUERING THE POGGIO

With the sun belting down and the warm, turquoise Mediterranean waters to our left, our first pedal strokes in Italy lead us straight towards one of cycling's toughest finishes: the last 40km of Milan-San Remo.

As we enter the seaside town of San Lorenzo al Mare, we peel off to the right from the SS1, the coastal artery that links Genoa (Italy's biggest port) to France, and start climbing immediately. With Charlie Boy driving a solid tempo, we're firmly in our big blades, negotiating the gradient. We start to feel the effects of our efforts, but the names of cycling heroes, proudly decorating the road surface and ancient stone walls, motivate us to keep pushing. As we unleash the watts, we simulate a three-man breakaway, racing our hearts out. This, after all, is no ordinary climb – it's the Cipressa. The Cipressa: the penultimate climb of the iconic 250km Milan-San Remo classic. Legends have been born on this climb.

As we summit 5.8km later, there's no time to recover – immediately we dive back to sea level. The finish line awaits 25km along the coast in San Remo... but before thinking of any two-armed salutes, we still need to conquer – the Poggio!

Exiting Bussana, again we veer to the right off the SS1, attacking the famous 4km climb – where, as with the Cipressa, almost every surface is adorned with the sort of names you hear every weekend on SuperSport. With an average gradient of only 3.7%, the Poggio is no beast – but after 245km in the saddle, it can break you. This is where Milan-San Remo is often won or lost.

Big Al, 'The Power', a man of few words – and a *rouleur*, a versatile rider who thrives when the going gets tough – has goosebumps as we rise above the Ligurian Sea. At last he can scratch the Cipressa and the Poggio off his bucket list.

LAIDBACK LIGURIA

The coastal region of Liguria lies in north-western Italy and is bordered by France to the west, Piemonte to the north and Tuscany to the east. The SS1 runs the length of its 350km coastline, offering cyclists incredible views and a relatively easy, flat route. Heading west, the SS1 leads you into France (with no passport controls), on to Monaco and back into France.

On our second morning we decided we had to do a lap of the Monaco Grand Prix... you know, as you usually do on a Monday morning. Seventy-five kays later we were carving down the corkscrew, blowing kisses at the belters prancing outside the Casino; and of course we raced over the finish line – albeit at a fraction of Formula One speed!

With baguettes, salami, smelly camembert and Cokes in our back skyrockets, we hit the harbour for lunch. Holy moly – the floating palaces harboured in Monte Carlo are next-level. It was all a bit surreal, casually picnicking in the heart of this global ostentatiousness. But it didn't faze us. The deck hands were 'polishing for porridge' – we were 'pedalling for paninis'!

Only a few kays away, Liguria couldn't be more different. The areas we rode through were littered with ancient, sleepy villages, the pace of life there all but bypassed by the hustle and bustle of modernity.

Refreshingly rural, the locals – best described as *sout van die aarde* – seemingly tick along to the rhythm of a fast-disappearing way of life. One where truck drivers still race home for lunch, most probably enjoyed with their parents. (We know this because here, people drive like lunatics at midday... home-cooked pasta waits for no-one!)

SO YOU THINK YOU CAN CLIMB?!

With 95% of Liguria described as mountainous or hilly, and given the labyrinth of quiet, rural roads – you simply cannot believe the extent of the road network – the region is a cycling goldmine. Over the course of our six days we didn't ride the same road twice. Mountain ridges stretch south from the Alps like fingers, right down to the coast, creating hundreds of valleys, each with its own character – and of course, connected via mountain passes!

The more you venture inland, the longer the climbs become. Summiting the 27km Monte Baldo ascent was a great moment for The Weapon – it was his longest-ever climb to date.

Charlie Boy, Big Al and I explored our surroundings, and the local olive farmers went about weed-eating their terraced groves (everyone weed-eats in Liguria, and almost every available space is terraced) or spraying for disease – on tiny tractors, the drivers wearing huge glass helmets and white overalls, making them look like Italian cosmonauts.

What struck us about Liguria was the abundance of road climbs. They're well surfaced and maintained for the most part, and off the main drag we rarely encountered traffic. It was a real treat. Snaking their way up, these side roads often led to the tiniest of villages, where we would buy and enjoy our daily lunchtime snack: a *prosciutto crudo panino*. That's if the village was big enough to have a shop!

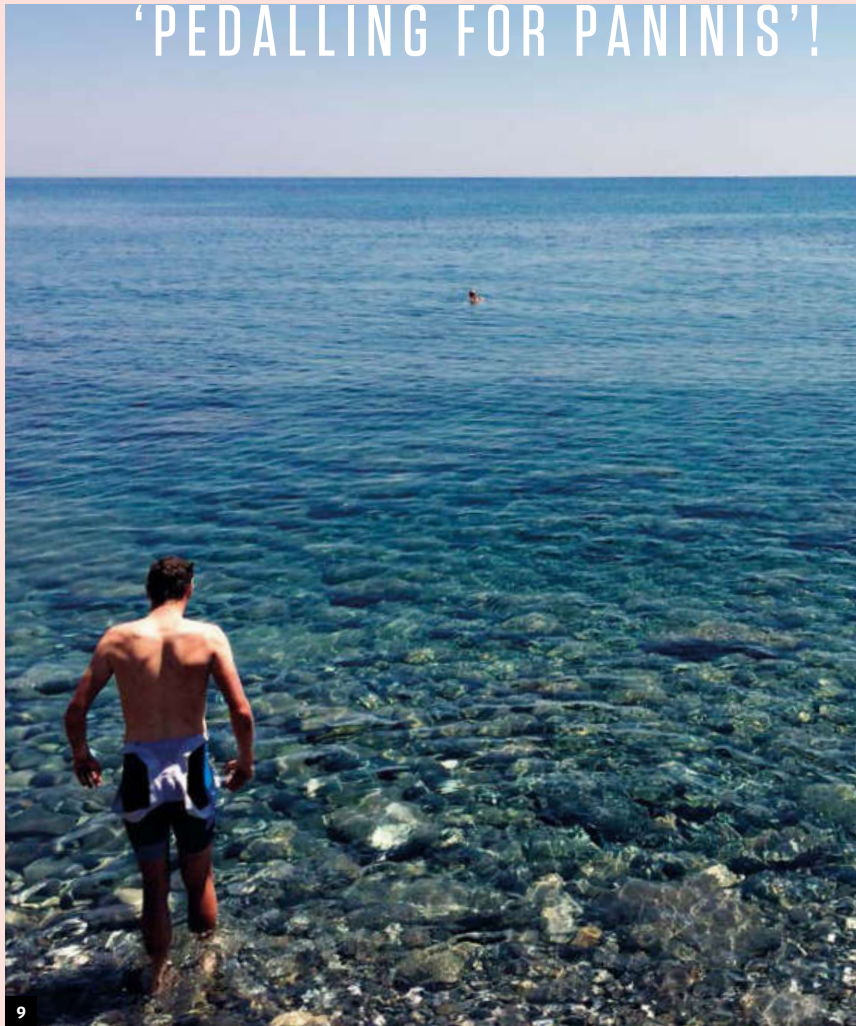
ARRIVEDERCI LIGURIA, CIAO LAGO DI GARDA

After 10 days ruling the roost in Liguria we travelled north, to Riva del Garda. The northern end of Lake Garda is home to two towns – Riva del Garda to the west and

Situated at the northern end of Lake Garda, the roads and topography surrounding Riva del Garda are a cycling goldmine. It's also a breathtakingly beautiful town, untarnished by thoughtless development (8). Charlie Boy had to cool off in the emerald Ligurian Sea as the mercury hit 35°C (9). Refuelling was essential – we hid our supplies at the base of the Passo di Campiglio, so we didn't have to carry them all the way up (10).



...BUT IT DIDN'T FAZE US.
THE DECK HANDS WERE
'POLISHING FOR
PORRIDGE' – WE WERE
'PEDALLING FOR PANINIS'!



9



10

MARATONA DLES DOLOMITES

A Gran Fondo is a one-day race for amateurs held on closed roads, and generally offers three route options, depending on your fitness level. While in Italy, I had the privilege of riding one of Italy's most famous and popular Gran Fondos, the Maratona Dles Dolomites, with two fellow South Africans, courtesy of Enervit and *Bicycling*.

As the name suggests, the annual event is held in the breathtakingly beautiful Italian Dolomites. All three of us bravely opted for the long 'Maratona' route, which saw us join thousands of passionate riders for a gruelling but extremely rewarding day in the saddle.

This 138km route's 4 230m of climbing was spread over seven climbs, the toughest of which was undoubtedly Passo Giau – a 9.9km climb, with a lactic-acid-inducing average gradient of 9.3%. And we reached it with 100km in the legs already!

As if Passo Giau wasn't enough, 5km from the finish we encountered the *mür dl giat* – the 'wall of the cat' – a 400m stretch that at 19%, feels literally like a vertical wall. After finishing this epic ride, I quickly erased the feeling of pedalling up the *mür dl giat* from my memory – much like one does after every Cape Epic stage. Now that I can't remember the pain, would I do it all again? Absolutely.

The Maratona Dles Dolomites also offers 55km 'Classico' and 106km 'Medio' routes, with 1 780m and 3 130m of climbing respectively. And these 'short' and 'medium' rides make the Cape Town Cycle Tour, 94.7 and Amashova look like kiddies' races!

Oli's trip to the Maratona Dles Dolomites was courtesy of Enervit, a sponsor of the event.

Torbole to the east, a stone's throw away from each other. Both are popular with active holidaymakers looking to enjoy the warm weather, lakeside beaches, water sports, cycling, hiking and rock climbing – as well as the local cultural and culinary offerings. Evidently, there is life beyond paninis!

And just when life couldn't get any better, it did. Having arrived and met up with the CVA guys – a band of brothers who brave any weather to ride three times a week at 5am from the Claremont Virgin Active – it was straight onto the bikes and up the first climb we could find!

Over the next four days our minds would be blown by the sheer beauty and variety offered by the Trentino area. Our rides stretched seamlessly from 8am to 6pm – a full day's graft every day, but spectacular views, unforgettable roads and the usual 'boys-on-tour' banter made for a truly world-class vibe.

Just goes to show: dreams do come true. ⑨



11

Unforgettable experiences are often more about the people you share them with, than the thing you're actually doing. In this case, we got both... the camaraderie among our group of friends, coupled with the spectacular Italian roads, scenery and weather, made for a phenomenal cycling bucket-list holiday (11).

THE TRAVEL ESSENTIALS

WHEN TO GO June and September are best. Avoid August, as Italy goes on holiday for the entire month.

GETTING AROUND While it is possible to use trains and buses, renting a car is the most convenient option – especially if you're travelling with non-cyclists who want to explore. Best to rent directly from the airport.

GEARING Be sure to fit a compact crankset (50/34T) with a 28T rear cassette, to make sure you don't blow your legs to pieces with all the climbing.

MAPS There's no shortage of detailed maps for Garda... just visit a local bike shop or tourist info centre. In Liguria, you can try the local tourist info centre, or a bike shop, but English is not widely spoken – Google Maps may have to do.

INTERNET It's not a bad idea to buy a SIM card that will allow you to access Google Maps while you're out on the road. We bought a €25 Vodafone SIM card preloaded with enough data for the entire trip.

NOT JUST A CYCLING DESTINATION

Both Liguria and Lake Garda offer a wealth of cultural and sporting activities to keep non-cyclists happily entertained – so there's no reason not to take your non-cycling partner along for the ride!

LIGURIA

WHERE TO FLY Genoa, or Nice (France), just across the border from Italy. For both airports you'll need to connect via a major hub like Dubai, London or Amsterdam.

WHERE TO STAY *San Remo*: sanremohotels.net/en/category/hotels-for-cyclists/

BIKE RENTAL For a casual ride along the 24km coastal cycling path from San Remo to San Lorenzo Al Mare, you can rent an ordinary bike. For anything more serious, it may be best to take your own bike – quality bike rentals are not readily available in Liguria.
SuperBikes: superbikesanremo.com

NORTHERN LAKE GARDA

WHERE TO FLY Milan Malpensa

WHERE TO STAY *Torbole*: Hotel Orchidea (2-star), villaorchidea.com
Riva del Garda: Hotel du Lac et du Parc (4-star), dulacetduparc.com

BIKE RENTAL If you don't fancy lugging your ride to Italy, you can always rent a road or mountain bike. It's a tourist hotspot, so there's plenty of choice. It's a good idea to take your own saddle and pedals, though. And when it comes to road bikes, be sure to request a compact crankset and 25C tyres, for a more comfy ride.

Carpentari Bike Shop: carpentari.com
Garda Bike Shop: gardabikeshop.com



THE LITTLE TEAM THAT COULD



IT WAS A FAIRYTALE TOUR DE FRANCE FOR MTN-QHUBEKA. NOW, AFRICA'S FAVOURITE UNDERDOGS ARE POISED TO BECOME THE CYCLING WORLD'S TOP DOGS.

WORDS BY JONATHAN ANCER ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY GRUBER IMAGES



IN 2011, DOUG RYDER STOOD UP IN FRONT OF THE WHO'S WHO OF WORLD CYCLING, AND SPOKE ABOUT BRINGING AN AFRICAN TEAM TO THE TOUR DE FRANCE.

"PEOPLE LOOKED AT ME AS IF I WAS CRAZY," RECALLS RYDER, A CYCLING ICON WHO IS NOW THE PRINCIPAL OF MTN-QHUBEKA. "I CAN STILL SEE THE LOOK IN THEIR EYES. IT WAS A LOOK THAT SAID, 'YAWN, YAWN, BLAH, BLAH, GET HIM OFF THE STAGE.' FOUR YEARS LATER, WE'RE ONE OF THE BEST-PERFORMING TEAMS IN THE WORLD – PRETTY COOL, HEY?"

Pretty cool indeed. Ryder's dream became reality. We watched in awe as Eritrean Daniel Teklehaimanot pulled the polka dot jersey over his head, and it would have been a hard-hearted person who didn't get goosebumps when Stephen Cummings won the stage on Mandela Day – a victory that even got a shout-out from President Jacob Zuma.

It wasn't the team's first historic occasion: that was when they received a wildcard entry to the Tour de France, making MTN-Qhubeka (powered by Samsung) the first team from Africa to attend the planet's most prestigious cycling race since it began 102 years ago.

Everyone loves an underdog – and MTN-Qhubeka were the Cool Runnings and Eric the Eel of cycling, all in one – but there was one major difference: they weren't there on a participation ticket. They were serious contenders.

The proof was in the *crème brûlée*, with seven of the team's nine riders getting a highly coveted top-10 position, Teklehaimanot wearing the polka dot jersey for four days, and Cummings' momentous Mandela-Day win. They achieved all that on a fraction of the budget of other teams.

"We had an amazing Tour de

France," said Ryder, who was still on a TdF high a month after the Champs-Élysées finish.

According to Ryder, the secret of the team's success was coaching consistency, analysing data, bringing in the strongest riders they could afford, and planning and paying attention to every detail.

"There was no guesswork – we planned *everything*. We analysed every single stage, we Google-Earthed the whole of France, we prepared the riders for the stages that suited them. We knew the Mandela Day stage would suit Steve, and planned accordingly. Of course luck is involved – but if you plan meticulously, you can guide luck in your direction. We had the African sun shining on our backs, and everything just fell into place. We were super, super-fortunate."

The team was especially motivated on 18 July, Mandela's birthday, and everything came together in a way that out-Hollywooded Hollywood.

"I don't usually speak to the riders; but in the bus that morning, I spoke to them about the importance of the day and the importance of Mandela, and about what Mandela means for South Africa. They were tired – racing takes its toll – but they were so committed and inspired.

I felt sorry for the teams racing against them."

It wasn't only the team riders who were inspired – their performance, said Cycling SA President William Newman, has inspired a new generation of cyclists. The team, Newman observed, carried South Africa and Africa's flag high, and exceeded all expectations – even their own.

"Before MTN-Qhubeka's success, going to the Tour de France was just a dream; but the team showed it can be a reality," he said.

Ryder noted that one of the spin-offs of the success has been getting more people in Africa onto bikes. "If Team Sky can get people in Britain riding in their kak weather, then there's no reason we shouldn't have success. I believe bikes can play a big role in Africa's future – more mobile, more free, more access to education, and more entrepreneurship."

Ryder said what was extra-special about the team was the charity aspect of Qhubeka. "It was one of our major performance goals – to be visible for Qhubeka, a charity that changes lives by putting people on bikes. We flew the flag for Qhubeka, and that in itself was a dream come true."

According to Ryder, there was no pressure on the team to win, which

was a unique racing strategy. "Our riders were inspired because they were using their platform to do good. The fact that the riders are helping to change lives gives them an extra gear. They dig deeper and want to win more badly when they know their performance will help someone else."

Ryder said MTN-Qhubeka had earned their invitation to the Tour, "and now the world takes this team seriously".

But despite the TdF successes, MTN has done to the team what some subscribers claim they do to their phonecalls: dropped them.

Shortly after Le Tour ended,

OPENING SPREAD

Eritrean rider Daniel Teklehaimanot prepares for the Stage 1 Time Trial, and goes on to write his name in the history books by becoming the first African to wear the polka dot jersey.

OPPOSITE

1 The 18th stage in the Alps saw riders go up the Montvernier climb.

2 Madiba magic for Mandela Day winner Steve Cummings.

3 Ryder shows the five-finger salute, a symbol of the team's #BicyclesChangeLives campaign.

4 The MTN-Qhubeka team that took on the 102nd Tour de France with their special-edition Cervélos.

OVERLEAF

Daniel Teklehaimanot and Steve Cummings hug in celebration of their dream TdF after Cummings' Mandela Day triumph.



Q&A...

SA's Louis Meintjes and Reinardt Janse van Rensburg

WHAT DID GOING TO THE TOUR DE FRANCE MEAN FOR YOU?

RJVR It might be a cliché, but it really was a dream come true. I always imagined myself in the Tour as a kid, but I knew that coming from a non-traditional cycling country, far away from the European centre of cycling, the odds were against me. Very few South Africans have ever competed in the Tour de France, and to me it's a great honour to be one of the select few.

LM It was a huge honour, and being in the first African-registered team with some of my teammates and friends starting their first TDF as well just made it even more special.

WHAT WAS YOUR HIGHLIGHT OF THE TOUR? AND A LOWLIGHT?

RJVR Most definitely Daniel Teklehaimanot taking the KOM jersey for a few days, and Steve Cummings winning for us on Mandela Day. You couldn't have scripted that win any better. The lowlight was the last stage. We were looking forward to parading in the sun towards Paris. Instead, it was raining, my legs were tired and I had heartburn.

LM Getting in the breakaway and finishing fifth on the stage to Plateau de Beille. My lowlight was lying in a hospital bed listening to the doctors saying I wouldn't be able to start the last few stages.

WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNT ABOUT YOURSELF AT THE TOUR?

RJVR I learnt that sometimes I'm too nice in the bunch and too respectful to some of the more experienced riders; and that if I want to go for results, I must not be scared to take my place in the peloton, or back down in pressure situations. Dog eats dog.

LM That I really love this sport, and that I want to come back to the TdF and finish it better next time.

WHAT DOES THE TDF MEAN FOR YOUR CAREER?

RJVR Some say finishing your first Tour is like graduation, or earning your master's degree in cycling.

LM: It gave me the opportunity to show the world what I can do on a bike.

“The fact the riders are helping to change lives gives them an extra gear. They dig deeper and want to win more badly when they know their performance will help someone else.”

the cellphone service provider declined to renew its title sponsorship.

Ryder said it would be sad if the team didn't continue – especially after all the things achieved over the last few years, the obstacles overcome, and all the love that has come from South Africa. The value generated from social media alone has been estimated at millions of rands.

However, Ryder said, there'd been massive interest both locally and internationally, and he was expecting another title sponsor to come on board. “Our aim is to be local and African. I drive a branded vehicle, and it's amazing how people react when they see the car: hooting, waving and giving me the thumbs-up. Africa needs to be in world cycling. We have potential across Africa – and the team provides a path to the pro peloton.”

Ryder said the plan was to continue on the WorldTour, and to build the depth of the team.

“We now have an opportunity for more African riders to race in the world's biggest races, and to compete with the best. We want to attract and retain the best African talent. We are the number-one Pro Continental team – that's incredible. We can build on that, and become one of the highest-performing teams in the world.”

He said the team's three-year plan starts with paying attention to the small details.

“We'll be back at the TdF next year, and will go there with bigger aims: to win a jersey, compete for more stage wins, and focus on the team performance, to be even more visible in the racing – and to do even better than top-five. The team is strong.”

MTN-Qhubeka has continued its TdF momentum with impressive performances in the Tour of Denmark (Edvald Boasson Hagen won the second stage) and the Tour of Utah.

Ryder said there's every reason to believe that in the next few years, the team will go to a Grand Tour and compete for podiums with the likes of Chris Froome and Alberto Contador. This underdog has serious bite.

TO CONTRIBUTE TO QHUBEKA OR FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE CHARITY, GO TO BICYCLESCHANGELIVES.ORG

THE TEAM'S TOUR DE FRANCE BY NUMBERS

14 top-10 finishes in 21 stages

7 riders managed a top-10 finish in at least one stage

9 riders managed a top-20

4 times best team

5th-best team overall

1 stage win, by Steve Cummings

4 days in the polka dot King of the Mountain jersey, by Daniel Teklehaimanot

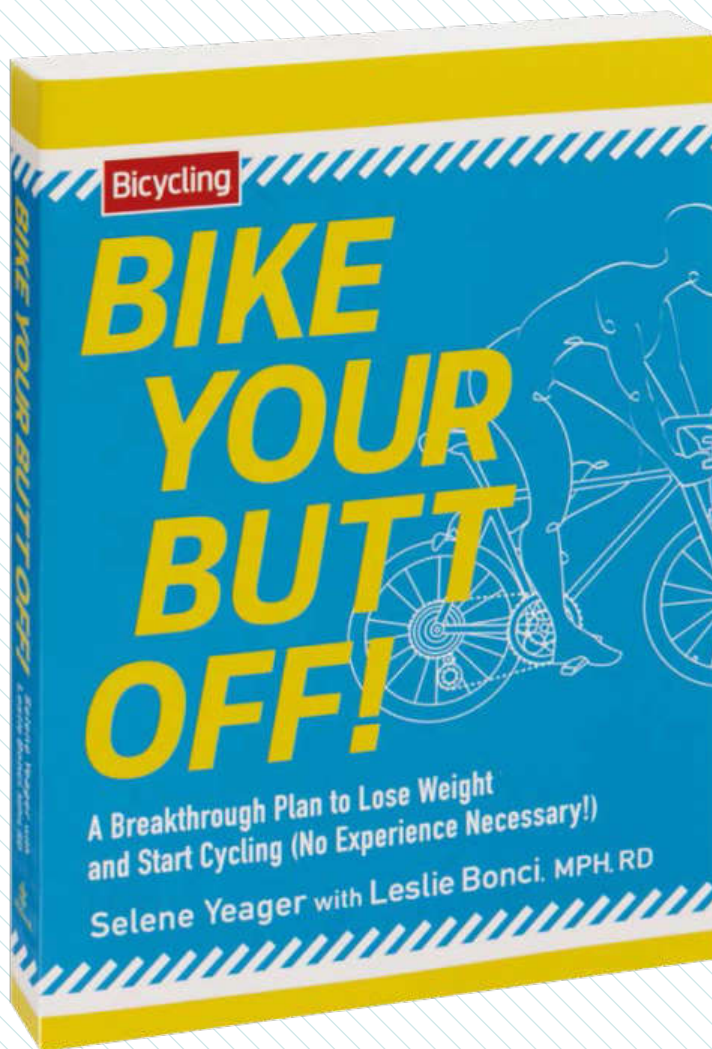
Serge Pauwels spent 17:19:20 in breakaways, becoming the Tour's number-one breakaway rider

1st African-based professional cycling team at the TdF



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EXCLUDING POSTAGE

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THE NIGHT OF THE

A full moon. An ancient desert. Wild camping, big-ass scorpions and a solid supply of cold beer on tap. Now add 300km of night-time MTB meditation, and you're set to discover the soul of the Desert Knights MTB Tour...

WILD NIGHTS Spectacular night rides in a remote wilderness make the Desert Knights MTB Tour a bucket-list event.

MOON CHASERS

A person wearing a yellow shirt and a helmet is riding a mountain bike up a steep, rocky trail at night. The trail is illuminated by a bright light source, possibly a headlamp, creating a strong glow and casting long shadows. The background features a dark, starry sky with a large, bright moon visible. The overall scene is dramatic and adventurous.

PHOTOGRAPHY
& WORDS
JACQUES MARAIS



Rule Number #1 of Desert Knights: “Do not bitch about the sand. It’s a desert, after all – what exactly did you expect?” That’s me, berating myself after a moment of near-bike-tossing, somewhere close to what must be the very epicentre of the /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park.

The reason for my momentary lapse of unreason brings me to Rule #2 of Desert Knights: “Never trust the barman, especially when it comes to route directions.” A pretty good maxim for life in general, really, but if you’re out in the desert on your lonesome with midnight tick-tocking your way, it cuts to the quick.

His ‘turn left after 8km’ should have been

‘keep right after 6km’, and with a couple of cold Windhoek drafts sloshing in my belly, the sandy track I had been diverted along was – shall we say – less than ideal. Fortunately, a few kays further into my nocturnal wild goose chase, said barman caught up to me in his Land Rover, and sheepishly rectified what he described as ‘a brain fart of note’.

And as the lights of his vehicle disappeared into the desert (k)night, I realised I should thank him rather than berate him. After all, this desert is mind-f*ck beautiful; and as I had the whole night ahead of me to negotiate the route to Hakkiesdoring Camp, a few additional stretches of sand would be pretty much irrelevant. ►

THIS PAGE: Getting lost in the dead of night in the Richtersveld is mandatory. Getting found is essential. **OPPOSITE TOP:** Unlike at most other stage races, start times are late enough for everyone to enjoy a leisurely breakfast and early-morning sun from their tents. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The Richtersveld is littered with old cars perfect for gnarly group photographs.

With these thoughts fluttering like punch-drunk moths through my mind, I duly clipped in and cranked off into the endless night. Moon shadows cavorted, bats dervished in and out of my light beam, and I belted out an off-key rendition of 'La Luna', a song I was embarrassed to discover I still remember from a distant Belinda Carlisle crush.

This is the thing about being alone in a desert. You begin to talk to yourself. You sing songs very loudly just to listen in spellbound amusement as the echoes bounce back in snatches from the rock-riddled outcrops. And it's true that Desert Knights did have a soundtrack – but it certainly wasn't 'Oh, La Luna, La Luna'.

No, if I could record this specific earworm, it would most probably go platinum on the *Ballie* Charts... something along the line of two parts Kurt Cobain, one part Radio Kalahari Orkes (don't knock it before you hear it) and a liberal dose of Florence and the Machine. No iPod or headphones required though, as this baby downloads directly into your medulla oblongata.

"So, what the hell is Desert Knights?" I hear some wiseass pipe up over my desertainment. Jeez, where to begin... At heart, it's an 'MTB tour', but only for want of a better term; and once you begin ticking the various boxes, you soon realise it's so much more.

Imagine: instead of waking up at sparrow's to

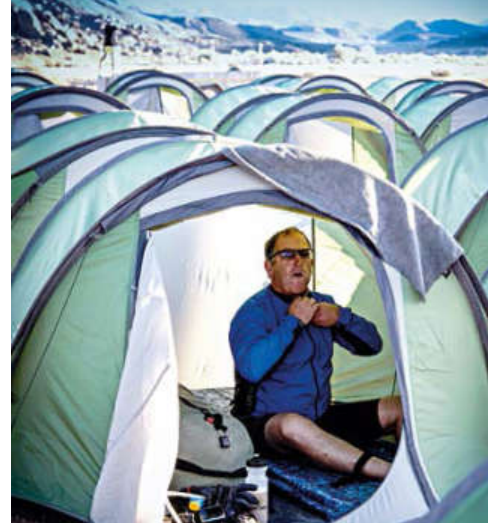
crank off into the sub-zero bite, you yawn and amble off to brekkie around 7am (and that's on a bad day). Then – depending on where your tent was pitched by the race back-up team – you could chill and read your book under a desert acacia; wander off on a nature hike with 'Mier', the resident botanist; or even fly-fish for small-mouth yellows on a river rapid right next to your camp.

One of my Energiser-bunny ride mates fitted in a two-hour desert trail run every morning at dawn (and still kicked ass on the bike!), so there you go. Day 1 sees you go loopy-the-loop from Hobas Camp in Namibia, cranking on the very edge of the breathtaking Fish River Canyon. Breathtaking? I'm talking view here, as opposed to 'lung-busting', as the day's 45km is pretty laid-back.

A BIT MORE INTENT

Day 2 kicks in with a bit more intent, but only after a day of chilling at the legendary Canyon Road House. This is the only spot with Wifi for a million miles around, so besides trying to unlock the secret of Pandora's Box (um, check out the men's restrooms for yourself if you're ever up there), it was pretty much business unusual.

Once you've done those important status updates and pigged out on strudel, you can consider yourself carbo-loaded for a late-arvie blast along the back roads, all the way to the



“...INSTEAD OF WAKING UP AT SPARROW’S TO CRANK OFF INTO THE SUB-ZERO BITE, YOU YAWN AND AMBLE OFF TO BREKKIE AROUND 7AM...”



“AFTER ALL, THIS DESERT IS MIND-F*CK BEAUTIFUL; AND I HAD THE WHOLE NIGHT AHEAD OF ME TO NEGOTIATE THE ROUTE.”

/Ai/Ais Hot Springs. The riding is mostly along goodish gravel roads, but with more than enough evil corrugations and sandy washes thrown into the mix to keep you wide awake.

/Ai/Ais is a jol of note, with indoor and outdoor mineral baths varying in temperature, so it's just the thing to sort out any aches and pains. It's also just the thing for spending most of the day suspended in lukewarm luxury while sipping on that endless supply of Windhoek Draft that seems to be part and parcel of this amazing tour.

My favourite day was up next: a solid climb out of /Ai/Ais before you skitter onto a jiggerish jeep track, side-swiping past an old mine and onto an alluvial plain. Howl at the moon as you bomb past silhouette windmills and ancient Dodge trucks, and then sync into the silence as you cleave the cliffs of Gamkab Canyon, where you camp wild for the night.

Up next, there's a sneaky twist to your regular MTB Stage Tour format. At dawn on Day 4, you're given a paddle and a life jacket and are plopped onto a double kayak, with instructions to paddle downriver. Initially, the Desert Knights thought, 'Aha – Rest Day!', and much antickering and revelry ensued; but as the day wore on, it became clear that believing the words 'around the next bend' could make for a hardcore day on the river.

I saw some tough buggers get extremely grumpy as they dabbled at the water with their oars, pretending to row, with the harsh light of mutiny burning bright in their eyes. Eventually, after nearly seven hours of kayaking (admittedly, along a stunning section of river), a bunch of bedraggled mountain bikers hauled themselves ashore at De Hoop, officially on South African soil at last.

BEER FIX

One thing I've learnt from this desert trip is that there is NOTHING a cold beer can't fix, and pretty soon those flagging spirits were rekindled.

Ulric Roberts, a spokesperson for the Nama people, told rousing campfire tales, while the local Richtersveld *tannies* put together a spread consisting of everything from *roosterkoek* and venison pie to a gargantuan three-legged pot of *afval* – basically sheep's brains, trotters, tripe and tongue. It was fantastic, I swear; and that was before I had those half-dozen beers.

And as a camp site, De Hoop pretty much rocks, too... the tents are set right on the river, and you can fly-fish for yellows, hike into the shale-shocked koppies rucking up all round, or chill in the gentle flow of the mighty Orange. Way too soon it was time to saddle up again, with the good knights setting off on their steeds to crank into the late afternoon glow.

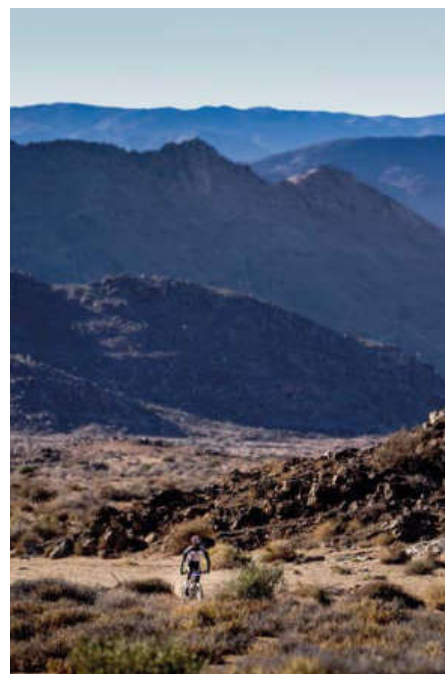
The penultimate day's ride churned along a rambunctious little pass before dropping onto vast plains – with no need for our bike lights, as the moon was switched to 'bright', glimmering high above like some kind of Gouda space cheese. And with that rather cheesy simile, follow on my back wheel as I grunt up the last climb into Hakkiesdoring, for our final night in the wilds...

What waited on Day 6 was a downright epic ride over the tortuous Helskloof Pass and to the finish venue at Sendelingsdrift. In my mind, this was by far the most hardcore day of the whole of Desert Knights, with proper calf-cruncher ascents and juddery, crap-in-your-shorts bike-slider downhills.

But you know what? I'm not going to tell you about this, or about getting lost for an hour along the final few kays, or the elation of crossing the finish line, or the *kakpraat* and camaraderie at the *opskop* (or hoedown, if you want) later that night.

Why? Because quite frankly, my friend, you have to go and experience this ride first-hand, at least once in your life. And that – as they say in the classics – is your cue: go and howl at the desert moon, bru... you'll thank me for it. **B**

TOP AND BOTTOM: The Desert Knights MTB tour is part cycling and part adventure. It's the thrill of riding at different times on different terrain that makes the event memorable. Things to pack include lights and oars... yes, oars!





WHEN TO RIDE

The /Ai/Ais-Richtersveld Transfrontier Park can be a bit of a meteorological enigma. A mist by the name of 'Malmokkies' can chill you to the bone on any given day, but generally summer is set to Damn Hot, while the winters are dialled into the high twenties. Desert Knights events are run twice a year: autumn (end April) and spring (mid-September). Or, if you'd prefer to show a fat middle finger to the crowds, how about you do it whenever? The whole park's open for riding, with heaps of new singletrack in the pipeline.

GETTING THERE

From Springbok, head (via Steinkopf) to Port Nolloth, enjoying the tarmac while it lasts. Expect to take at least 2.5hrs to navigate the remaining 80km of gravel to Sendelingsdrift (and

two to three more if you're heading to De Hoop on a solo mission). Keep in mind that access to the park is limited to 4x4s, but this is not an issue as all riders are transferred between start and finish. **GPS Coordinates: De Hoop - -28.175533 / 17.177811 E**

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Don't miss out on the exhilarating Desert Kayak Trip, which can now be booked as a separate four-day paddling experience along the Orange River. Hiking, scrambling, bird watching and 4x4 trails will keep you busy off the bike.

TERRAIN

I'm not going to lie... the Desert Knights route is mostly along gravel roads, and you can expect a lot of corrugations and a generous dollop of sand.

This may not make it the most amazing riding in the world, but the fact that you can do it on your lonesome ownsome, and under a full moon, morphs it into an utterly unique experience that cannot be duplicated; or conveyed in words or images, really. This is as close to meditating as you will get on a mountain bike. More good news: a generous grant will enable the Transfrontier Park to create kilometre upon kilometre of singletrack over the next few years – watch this space!

CONFIGURATION

The first three days of riding takes you from Hobas to /Ai /Ais to Gamkab Canyon; from here a (gruelling) paddling day gets you to De Hoop on the SA side (via an unofficial border crossing, but all arranged by the organisers). There are two further days of Richtersveld

riding to Sendelingsdrift, from where a transfer can return you to Hobas.

GRADING

Hear me loud and clear: this is not a ride for rank rookies. Although the daily distances are relatively short, the sandy terrain and corrugations make for tough riding, in a desert environment where the climate can play a big role. Prepare properly, or suffer.

DURATION

Daily distances range from 45km to 65km, so not really massive. But conditions may result in anything from four to seven hours in the saddle. The kayak day (39km) took seven hours of down-river blading, with a good few white-water spills.

MORE INFO

www.desertknights-mtb.com

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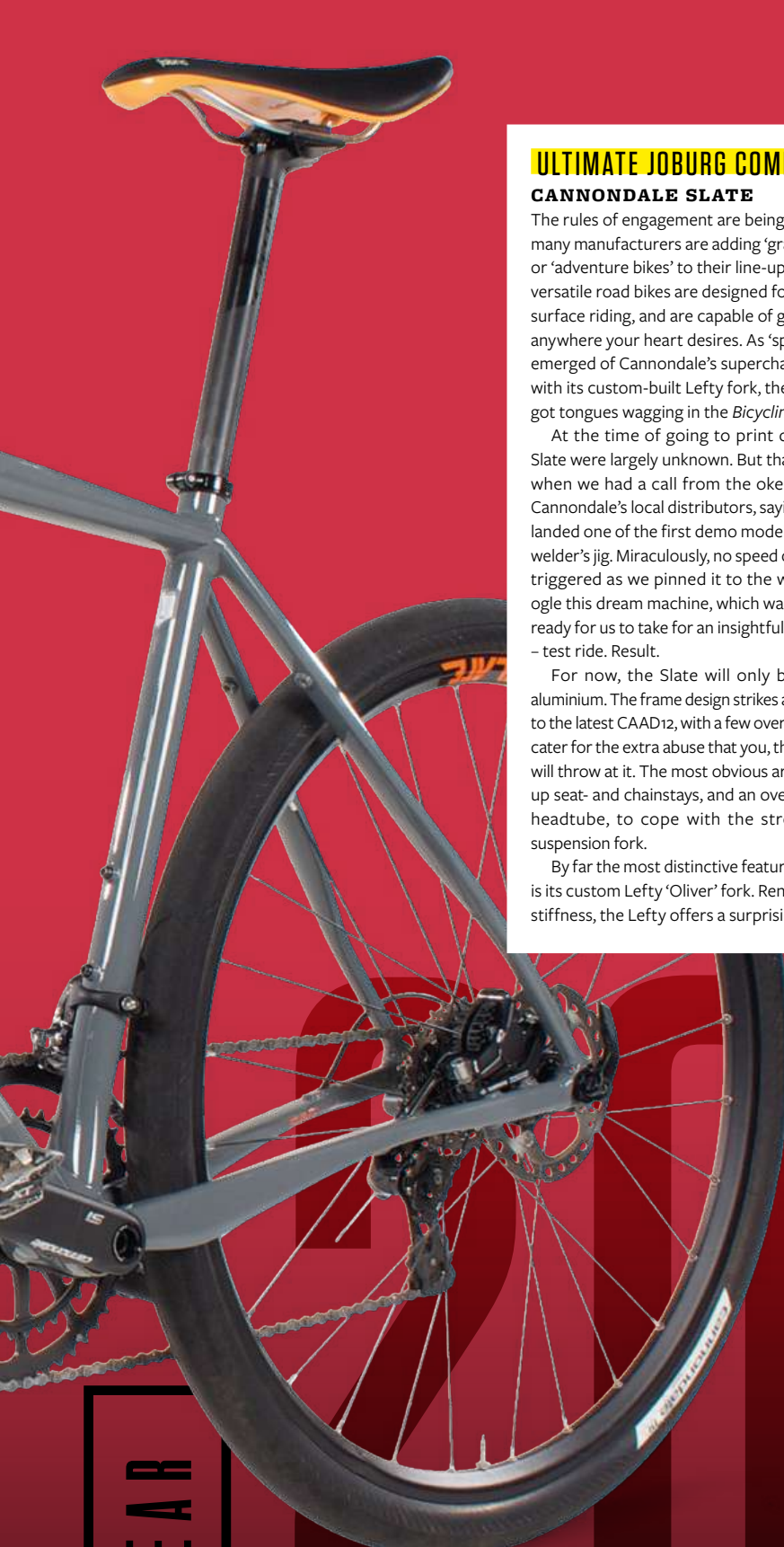
EDITED BY OLI MUNNIK

MEET OLIVER

→ NEWS, VIEWS & REVIEWS OF THE LATEST GEAR

Cannondale's latest offering, an adventure road bike called the Slate, sports this brand-new 30mm Lefty Oliver suspension fork, to smooth out bumps in the road and increase traction when the going gets rough. Read all about it – and 14 other exciting new 2016 products set to reach our shores in the coming weeks. **Gear Ed Oliver Munnik** (*no relation*. – Ed) also tests PowerTap's eagerly-awaited P1 pedals...





ULTIMATE JOBURG COMMUTER

CANNONDALE SLATE

The rules of engagement are being rewritten; many manufacturers are adding 'gravel-grinders' or 'adventure bikes' to their line-ups. These versatile road bikes are designed for multi-surface riding, and are capable of going almost anywhere your heart desires. As 'spy-shots' emerged of Cannondale's supercharged Slate, with its custom-built Lefty fork, they certainly got tongues wagging in the *Bicycling* office.

At the time of going to print details of the Slate were largely unknown. But that all changed when we had a call from the oaks at Omnico, Cannondale's local distributors, saying they'd just landed one of the first demo models to leave the welder's jig. Miraculously, no speed cameras were triggered as we pinned it to the warehouse to ogle this dream machine, which was built up and ready for us to take for an insightful – albeit short – test ride. Result.

For now, the Slate will only be offered in aluminium. The frame design strikes a resemblance to the latest CAAD12, with a few oversized tubes to cater for the extra abuse that you, the adventurer, will throw at it. The most obvious are the beefed-up seat- and chainstays, and an oversized 44mm headtube, to cope with the stresses of the suspension fork.

By far the most distinctive feature on the Slate is its custom Lefty 'Oliver' fork. Renowned for its stiffness, the Lefty offers a surprisingly effective

30mm of travel, noticeably softening the ride and improving front-wheel traction.

The Slate rolls on 650b mountain-bike wheels, which in conjunction with high-volume 42mm tyres provide the same outside wheel diameter as 700c rims fitted with 22mm tyres. So the effective wheelsize is the same, but you benefit from hugely increased tyre volume, providing greater comfort and increased resistance to punctures – critically important for a bike designed to spend a lot of time on gravelly trails and surfaces. We found the ideal pressure to be 45psi, or 3.1 bar.

Looking at the nitty-gritty numbers, the Slate/Lefty combo features a 71.5-degree head angle (giving a 66.3mm rake) and 405mm chainstays to keep the handling snappy, while the wheelbase is 1 015mm. 12x142mm dropouts increase stiffness and make disc alignment a cinch.

While a carbon version hasn't hit the headlines, *Bicycling* suspects Cannondale may reveal a flagship carbon model in late August at Eurobike. It would most probably incorporate their SAVE technology to increase rear-end compliance.

In a nutshell, the Slate has unequivocally been designed for riders who don't care about racing. We think it's just the steed for those Joburgers who like to commute, but can't decide between their MTB or road machine.

PRICE R48 500
OMNICO.CO.ZA

GEAR

15 BRAND-SPANKING-NEW BIKES, PARTS AND KIT ITEMS TO GET YOU FROTHING FOR 2016.
COMPILED BY GEAR ED OLI MUNNIK.

MORE COMFORT, MORE SPEED

SCOTT FOIL

Not to be outdone in 2016, Scott have joined Trek and Specialized in revealing an all-new design for their second-generation aero road bike, the Foil. Since its 2010 debut, the Foil has won an impressive 115 World-Tour races, including 16 Grand Tour stages and three Classics, making it more than simply a bike that can cheat the wind; rather, it's a balanced package that excels in the aerodynamic department.

The Foil has been transformed into a lighter, stiffer, more aerodynamic and more comfortable package than the previous version. Scott claim that like-for-like testing between the new and old Foils revealed considerable improvements.

Updated tube profiles equate to an aerodynamic advantage of six

watts and 27.2 seconds over a 40km time trial at 45km/h; a refined carbon lay-up means a 13% stiffer bottom bracket, a 13.5% stiffer headset, and a 6% stiffer front fork, while the new Foil's ride quality (measured as vertical compliance) has been improved by a staggering 89%. High-end models will feature Syncros' new integrated carbon cockpit, which was developed in conjunction with the new Foil – nine different aftermarket combinations will be available to suit various riding positions and set-ups.

SCOTT FOIL PREMIUM EDITION (PICTURED)

AVAILABLE ON REQUEST | PRICE R120 000

SCOTT FOIL 20 | PRICE R45 000

SCOTT-SPORTS.COM





WEIGHT-WEENIE'S DELIGHT

MERIDA SCULTURA TEAM

Merida have celebrated the Scultura's 10th anniversary by launching the fourth-gen Scultura 4, with a claimed frame weight of just 740g, putting it in the same league as the Cannondale SuperSix Evo, Scott Addict and Specialized S-Works Tarmac. They've gone a step further by shaving between 70 and 90 grams (depending on frame size) off their 'absolute top model', the Scultura 9000 LTD. The frame weighs 680g; a fully-built 9000 LTD stops the scales at 4.56kg, making it the world's lightest production bike! The stiffer and more practical 6.6kg Scultura Team will be used by Lampre-Merida team riders as their go-to option when the road points heavenwards. Weight wasn't the only consideration on the new Scultura: new tube profiles borrowed from the Reacto improve aerodynamics, while organic flax fibres are laminated between the individual carbon layers to filter high-frequency vibration and improve ride quality. Tyre clearance has been updated to fit 700x25C rubber.

PRICE R79 999
MERIDA-BIKES.COM



AERO TO THE MAX

TREK MADONE

Trek engineers have been slaving away: designing, testing and tweaking their creations. Their labour of love has given birth to two mountain bikes and an aero road bike. The Procaliber SL is a super-light hardtail that features a custom-tuned IsoSpeed decoupler, similar to the one found on Trek's Domane road bike, which allows for added rear-end compliance – up to 11mm. Next up is the revamped Top Fuel, which replaces the Superfly FS as Trek's flagship 100mm dual-suspension machine. The Top Fuel sports a few updates – notably a new suspension layout, promising to make the bike more capable. The third project is Trek's all new Madone. No detail was considered insignificant as engineers strove to maximise aerodynamics, integration and ride quality. The frame and fork's slippery KVF tubing is shaped to minimise drag, and a fully integrated IsoSpeed decoupler offers superior ride quality by enhancing vertical compliance. Where the Madone truly shines is in its integration of cable, braking, electronics, and bearing interfaces.

PRICE POA
DARKHORSEBRANDS.CO.ZA



THE SOFT HARDTAIL

BMC TEAM ELITE 01

World Cup cross-country is brutal. Your body screams for a reprieve from the pain, but you have to maintain razor-sharp focus. There's absolutely no margin for error. With this in mind, BMC have produced the Team Elite 01 hardtail, featuring 'micro-travel' technology in the rear seatstays. The Swiss company worked closely with BMC pro team riders Julian Absalon and Ralph Naf. What team riders asked for was a hardtail (because it's the lightest option) that allows them to dominate vicious climbs on the World Cup circuit, while simultaneously featuring added damping for greater recovery, control and traction. Simply, they wanted the best of both worlds.

If you look closely at the junction between the seatstays and the seat tube you'll notice an XCell damper, giving 15mm of compliance. With an intricate carbon layup, BMC were able to adapt the chainstays to flex enough to accommodate this 15mm movement without the need for any linkage.

Enhanced rear-end compliance subtly improves traction by soaking up smaller bumps and roots, improving grip, while still keeping the rear end stiff enough not to lose energy when sprinting or climbing.

PRICE R84 999
BMC-SWITZERLAND.COM

TRAIL BOSS

SPECIALIZED S-WORKS STUMPJUMPER FSR CARBON 29ER

Born in 1981, and considered the first-ever production mountain bike, for 2016 the Stumpjumper builds on an already impressive legacy, offering an agile package that delivers precise, snappy handling, based around an efficient FSR suspension platform.

Updates from 2015 include shorter chainstays (437mm, down from 450mm), a slacker head angle (1.5° down, to 67.5°) and a slightly shorter, 1115mm wheelbase. The rear shock has also received new tuning, to improve handling on the descents and pedalling efficiency when climbing.

Borrowing characteristics from both the big-hitting Enduro 29er and the more XC-specific Camber 29er, the 130mm Stumpjumper FSR 29er is positioned neatly between the two, offering a bike that accelerates and climbs like the Camber but descends like the Enduro – a happy medium.

An aspect that's got a lot of people talking is the Stumpjumper's all-new SWAT Door storage solution, which features a cavity built into the frame's downtube. Two pouches securely hold anything from a spare tube, multi-tool or pump, to a baguette for when your tummy starts to grow! We'll be reviewing this hassle-free (and reportedly rattle-free) storage system soon, so keep an eye out for it in upcoming issues.

The Stumpjumper FSR will also be available in '27.5-Plus' size, which is sure to throw the cat among the pigeons [see right for a brief explanation of '27.5-Plus' – Ed].

When I asked a good (and reliable) friend of mine how it handled on the trail, he simply said: "Strava doesn't lie, my bru."

PRICE R124 999
SPECIALIZED.COM



WHAT'S '27.5-PLUS' ALL ABOUT?

Just when you thought you had the three wheel sizes all worked out, the industry decides to roll out a new 'Plus' wheel/tyre configuration to make things even more complicated. Before you start puzzling over the matter, here is a brief introduction to 'Plus'-sized bikes.

In a nutshell, this refers to mountain bikes designed to run 27.5" wheels (aka 650b), but with super-high-volume 'Plus' tyres that range from 2.8" to 3.2", putting them in between 'normal' 2.0" to 2.4" tyres, and 4" to 4.8" fat-bike tyres.

The increased tyre volume/width means that specific 'Plus'-sized forks, frames and hubs are necessary. Not to mention geometry, to suit the new riding characteristics.

Practically, with their impressive contact patch, Plus-sized tyres offer huge amounts of grip, while their high volume improves damping. Manufacturers claim that weight and rolling resistance penalties are minimal – these drawbacks must be considered against improved traction, control and tyre stability.

It's too early to tell if they'll take off, but one thing's for sure: the 27.5-Plus size's increased grip and control will help beginners and those on hardtails to tame technical sections of trail even better.

LOOK OUT FOR THESE 2016 MODELS AVAILABLE IN 27.5-PLUS:

SPECIALIZED FUSE EXPERT 6FATTIE

PRICE R28 999



SCOTT GENIUS 720 PLUS

PRICE R46 000



IT AIN'T (THAT) HEAVY

SRAM GX

For riders who may have been priced out of a 1x11 upgrade, SRAM have now released the GX drivetrain, which is slightly heavier than higher-end drivetrains (think XX1), but much more affordable. Locally, GX will be available in 1x11 and 2x11 configurations, with either grip shift or trigger shifters.

Crucially, the GX 'family' of parts is compatible with existing 11spd SRAM components. GX makes sense then, whether you're wanting to replace existing, worn-out SRAM parts or looking for an upgrade.

PRICE R7 835 (rear mech R1 690, trigger shifter R685, crank R2 950, cassette R1 950, chain R560)
CAPE-CYCLES.CO.ZA



SAFETY FIRST

BELL TRAVERSE

MIPS, which stands for Multi-directional Impact Protection System, is a brain-protection system that reduces rotational forces on the brain caused by angled impacts to the head. Until now it's been built into range-topping helmets only, not mid-range models like the Traverse MIPS. With 18 vents, an Ergo-fit retention system, removable visor and MIPS technology, the 308g Traverse MIPS is outstanding value for money.

PRICE R1 100 with MIPS, R699 without MIPS
OMNICO.CO.ZA



SEAL THE DEAL FOR A STEAL

RYDER TUBELESS TYRE CONVERSION KIT

Ryder's Tubeless Tyre Conversion kit is designed to help bike shops convert your bike cheaply and easily. Remarkably, for R799, the kit includes a set of 29x2.2" or 26x2.1" Hornet tubeless-ready tyres with a 60tpi. They feature sidewall protection, and dual-compound rubber – medium-density in the middle, and softer on the outside. The kit also includes Ryder tubeless sealant, which doesn't harden with CO2 and plugs holes up to 5mm; tubeless rim tape for two wheels; and tubeless valves with removable valve cores.

PRICE R799
OMNICO.CO.ZA



LIGHTWEIGHT HYDRATION

FABRIC CAGELESS WATER BOTTLE

Fabric's 600ml cageless water bottle does away with the need for a cage by mounting directly onto your frame. Instead of using a traditional cage and bottle, this system has two small studs that screw into the frame mounts. The bottle itself has moulded recesses that mate to the studs, creating a simple, secure 'male and female' connection. At 1.5g each, no traditional bottle cage can compete on the weight front! The minimalist design also maintains the clean lines of your bike.

PRICE R150
OMNICO.CO.ZA





REAL-LIFE SIZE WIDTH: 33.4MM ■ LENGTH: 50.8MM ■ DEPTH: 22.5MM

MINI ME

LEZYNE MINI GPS

In 2016, Lezyne will extend its range to include the company's smallest and lightest cycling GPS computer. The Mini GP is miniscule, and at 29g, feather-light.

The matchbox-sized, handlebar-mounted unit emphasises simplicity and elegance, offering a compact, powerful, easy-to-read solution for the cycling minimalist.

The Mini displays all the basic cycling-computer functions – current, average and max speed, trip time and distance – and also shows temperature, current elevation, elevation gain and loss, and

estimated calories burned. And since it's a GPS unit, there are no sensors to set up or sync.

The device doesn't offer real-time navigation or route-finding; but it does record rides (up to 100 hours in total) with the intention of you downloading and reviewing them at home. Rides can be downloaded in .fit format, which allows you to sync with platforms like Strava and TrainingPeaks – and Lezyne's in-house software, accessed via its 'Root' website or 'Ally' mobile app.

PRICE R2 045
TWO WHEEL TRADING.CO.ZA



ONE-BUTTON BLISS

GOPRO HERO4 SESSION

GoPro have released the HERO4 Session, the smallest, lightest and most convenient GoPro yet. Half the size and 40% lighter than current HERO4 Black and Silver cameras, the Session combines GoPro's renowned image quality and performance into a new, compact, more user-friendly package.

The HERO4 Session sports a durable waterproof design that eliminates the need for a separate housing, and features simple one-button control to make capturing photos and video quicker and more convenient than ever before. The camera captures 1080p60, 720p100 and 1440p30 video, along with eight-megapixel photos in single, burst and time-lapse modes. It's compatible with existing mounts, so there's no need to change anything else.

PRICE R6 499
OMNICO.CO.ZA



MAGNETISE YOUR LIFE

INTERNAL CABLE ROUTING KIT

Park Tool's brand manager has said this is one of their most anticipated products ever, for both home and LBS mechanics. With almost all modern frames featuring internally routed cables these days, the kit takes the guesswork out of installing cables, wires, and housing inside your frame – an often laborious task that would otherwise involve various vloeekwoorde.

The kit is safe to use on all carbon-fibre, titanium and aluminium frames. It includes three plastic-coated 250cm cables with attached magnets and unique fittings, plus an external guide magnet to speed up the process. It works thanks to opposite-polarity magnets on cables that seek and attach inside frame tubes, making it easy to route through frame entrances and exits. Importantly, it works with any size frame, including tandems. Save yourself the hassle – get magnetised.

PRICE R840
CAPE CYCLES.CO.ZA

OLD-SCHOOL IS COOL

SPECIALIZED SUB6 SHOE

Specialized offers a hyper-lightweight lace-up shoe in the form of the S-Works Sub6, which weighs 170g per shoe. It's built with six points of contact for a more refined fit, while the tongue features 'LaceLock' elastic to ensure the laces don't end up in your chainrings. The upper is made from a supple Micromatrix UL synthetic material, with laser-perforated venting for when temperatures rise. Keeping power transfer to a maximum is a full-carbon FACT Powerline sole, with a stiffness index of 13.0 – Specialized's highest. Engineers have designed the Sub6 with a slightly roomier toe box. They come with a laces cover, the Warp Sleeve, to shield against rain/wind.

PRICE R3 999
SPECIALIZED.COM



THE WORKHORSE GOES 11SPD

SHIMANO DEORE XT

When I speak to riders about drivetrains, many praise Shimano's Deore XT for its reliability and value for money – it strikes a great balance between the two. However, where Deore XT and Shimano have fallen short in the past, compared to their American rival SRAM, has been in their slow uptake of 11spd and 1x drivetrains.

The release this year of Shimano's first-ever 1x11 groupset, the XTR M9000, has changed all that. And Deore XT fans will be stoked to hear that the technology has trickled down to the second-tier, 'workhorse' groupset.

While the entire Deore XT (M8000) groupset, from brakes to shifters to pedals, has gone under the knife, the three most exciting changes are a brand-new 11spd 11-42T cassette, 3x, 2x and 1x chainring options, and an improved clutch on the rear derailleur, which is critical when running 1x11.

Deore XT will be available with either an 11-42T or 11-40T cassette; the 11-42 is designed specifically for 1x11 use, while the 11-40 works for both 2x11 and 3x11 configurations.

When it comes to 1x11, the 42T is a game-changer for Shimano, as it gives riders far more range when climbing. At the other end of the cassette, the 11T means that upgrading from 9- or 10spd to 11spd is possible without forking out for a new freebody or hub.

With the success of Ultegra Di2, we can only hope that the next instalment from Shimano will be the off-road equivalent Deore XT Di2.

PRICE +-R13 000
COOLHEAT.CO.ZA



TESTED

POWERTAP P1 POWER PEDALS

BUILDS FROM
R16 995

BICYCLEPOWER.CO.ZA



POWER TO THE PEDAL

BY OLI MUNNIK / PHOTOGRAPHS BY JAMES GARAGHTY

Ubiquitous in the power meter market for their distinctive hub-based units, PowerTap have now branched out with the release of the P1 Power Pedals. Gear Ed Oli Munnik gives them a spin, to find out what's watt.

DOWN MEMORY LANE I was introduced to bike-based power meters 10 years ago by my then-coach, Ian Rodger, who I had been working with over the past few years of downhill and marathon racing. At the time, power was only really measurable in lab conditions, on stationary bikes like the King Cycle – until, of course, PowerTap hubs began to infiltrate the local market.

As I was a 21-year-old student on a budget, Ian suggested I find the ammo to buy a second-generation PowerTap hub to measure and analyse my power output on every ride. Ian described power as a more stable, accurate unit of measurement than heart rate, as it isn't affected as much by outside environmental factors. And there's no lag time.

In those days, the system used a frame-mounted 'shark-fin' sensor that connected to the head unit via a cable... the thought of it being wired makes it sound as if it belongs in a museum!

Fast forward to the present, add to the mix the rapid advance of

WHAT TO DO WITH ALL YOUR DATA?

A GPS-enabled computer paired to a power meter gives you a wealth of information at your fingertips, both during your ride and downloaded afterwards.

While riding, I valued the P1's left/right analysis, which displays power per leg as a percentage – it helped keep my pedal stroke as even as possible. After a while, I was achieving a 50/50 balance without focusing on it.

Afterwards, gauging various efforts (especially from races) is very satisfying. (This was particularly well illustrated on a dawn patrol ride, when I found

myself in a battle royal with two mates. As we pinned it in complete darkness, me hanging on for dear life, it was difficult to gauge our effort, as I was watching their wheels and not the computer – safety first, kids! Once home, scrolling through the data revealed some pretty high wattage and heart rates – explains why it felt as though I was coughing up blood summiting Black Hill.)

It isn't a bad idea to get a coach to help you make sense of the numbers – you don't want to be aimlessly pushing watts without an idea of the bigger picture.



wireless technology, and you have a host of power meters that are hub-, crank-, pedal- and even heart-rate-based. You just have to look at the handlebar of any pro rider to see that power measurement has become the gold standard in tracking performance, ultimately making the user a fitter, stronger cyclist.

BRANCHING OUT With 15 years of experience, PowerTap has branched out to offer not just hub-based power meters, but also a pedal- and crank-based unit. Given my history, it was with a smile and a sense of nostalgia that I opened up the little black box containing PowerTap's latest offering, the P1 Power Pedals.

I rode the pedals over three weeks, using them on a variety of rides – from sub-10-degree dawn patrol missions to cheeky afternoon spins justified by the 'I-need-to-test-these-pedals' excuse! I was also able to use them riding the Maratona Dles Dolomites in Italy, a 136km Gran Fondo, in searing temperatures, which certainly put them through their paces.

INSTALLATION These pedals are a cinch to install: they're truly plug and play. All you need is an 8mm Allen key to fasten them to your crank, as you would any other pedal. This is a vastly easier and quicker system than, say, Garmin's Vector pedals, which have additional pods and require a torque wrench and installation angles to work.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- PLUG AND PLAY INSTALLATION IS A BREEZE
- AAA BATTERIES EASILY REPLACED
- TRANSMITS ANT+ AND BLUETOOTH
- MEASURES LEFT/RIGHT POWER OUTPUT, WITH $\pm 1.5\%$ ACCURACY
- TWO-YEAR WARRANTY

Unlike crank- or hub-based units, the pedals are easily transferred between training and racing bikes, or if you're a tri-athlete, a TT bike. Transferability and ease of installation are two massive advantages of the P1 pedals.

BATTERY LIFE Each pedal uses a standard AAA battery, which PowerTap claim will last up to 60 hours, or two months for the average rider. PowerTap opted for the AAA (as opposed to a coin cell or rechargeable battery) because they're readily available worldwide.

Battery housings are neatly tucked under each pedal's contact surface, and opened with a 5mm Allen key – super-easy.

WEIGHT Despite their chunky industrial look, the P1s won't add too much weight to your ride. While claimed weight is 398g (most likely pre-production), our test pair weighed in at 424g. As a comparison, a pair of Look Keo Classics tip the scales at 272g. But in my opinion, this is a small price to pay for the effectiveness, accuracy and usefulness of the P1 pedals.

DURABILITY Over a three-week test period, the P1s proved to be sturdy. As pedals often bear the brunt of accidents, PowerTap offers a crash-replacement of 40% off retail price, plus freight. This is in addition to a two-year warranty.

CLEATS Although the P1s use a cleat that looks very similar to a standard Look Keo, they are subtly different – I tried out my standard Keo cleats, and the fit was not optimal. The test pedals were supplied with red P1 cleats with 6° float – black versions with zero-degree float are available aftermarket, at R295 per pair.

CALIBRATION Like most power meters, the P1s need to be calibrated every ride, to set the base level at zero. This was pain-free on both PowerTap Joule GPS+ and Garmin computers. Pairing sensors was also easy.

LEFT/RIGHT MEASUREMENT Another strong point of the P1s is their ability to measure separate left and right power production, thanks to eight stress gauges and accelerometers in each pedal. This detail was neatly displayed (as a percentage) on the Joule GPS+, and is especially useful for riders recovering from injury or looking to improve their efficiency.

Also, those riding funny-looking egg-shaped chainrings will be pleased to know the P1s will support Osymetric rings/Q-rings.

(And a heads-up: the pedals include a 'Multipole Ring' sensor with 20 magnets positioned around each pedal spindle. This tech measures the application of force throughout the entire stroke, and identifies dead spots and pedal-stroke inefficiencies. It should also help bike fitters to fine-tune set-ups. PowerTap don't yet have a way to display this data, but they're working on a solution.)

ACCURACY Technology has come a long way in 10 years, and accuracy and data-recording consistency have improved – there were few if any gaps, spikes or dips noticeable on the graphs produced. Claimed accuracy is $\pm 1.5\%$.

CONNECTIVITY As is the industry norm, the P1s transmit both ANT+ and Bluetooth, which means they can communicate with compatible computers, your mobile phone, and other sensors. I used a Joule GPS+ and PowerTap's mobile app simultaneously to record rides. Both platforms were user-friendly, and displayed more than enough information. Rides are also easily uploaded via the free app to sites like TrainingPeaks, Strava, Facebook and Twitter.

So, with the P1s installed, sensors paired, and GPS and Joule recording, all that's left for you to do is provide the watts! **B**

FREE NEXT-DAY DELIVERY WHEN ORDERED ONLINE AT POWERTAP.CO.ZA

TESTED

PEARL IZUMI CANYON BAGGIES

PRICE R1 400

COOLHEAT.CO.ZA



BADASS BAGGIES

The Badass Baggie Brigade have the Lycra Bandits running for cover as they cruise the trails, leaving only roots in their wake. In 2015, Pearl Izumi joins the fray, with their recently released Canyon MTB shorts.

After years of Lycra ruling the roost, more riders are opting to ride (and even race) in baggies. A result, in my book! Pearl Izumi's Canyon shorts are ideal for South African conditions. At 292g for a size medium with inner lining, they're super-light, and their 'form-fit' cut means they're designed to hug your legs without compromising your pedal stroke, or even more importantly, chafing you. This, plus the 11-inch/28cm inseam, means the Canyon baggies are a pleasure to ride for hours. Even in windy conditions, they didn't flap constantly.

The shorts are made from what Pearl Izumi call 'Transfer Dry' material; during testing, it provided ample moisture wicking, and a supple feel against the legs. For the ideal fit, waist adjustment is easily tuned via two elasticated Velcro straps, while a sturdy snap button and zip keep things fastened up front.

Surprisingly, the inner lining – of breathable mesh panelling – is not detachable from the shorts. And the Canyons feature only one zipped pocket on the right, so not much storage space.

But all in all, these Pearl Izumi baggies are proof that there is Life After Lycra! – *Oli Munnik* **B**

WOMEN-SPECIFIC CANYON BAGGIES

The Canyon baggies are offered in a women-specific cut and a range of colours. Featuring 'Transfer Dry' stretch fabric and an 8"/20cm inseam (8cm shorter than the men's version), they're tailored to allow for unrestricted pedalling, while the 'Semi-Form' fit stops them flapping in the wind. The waist is easily adjusted via elasticated Velcro straps, and a snap front-closure system keeps them safely fastened. An improvement on the men's version is that a detachable women-specific MTB 3D chamois comes standard. Testing revealed both chamois and mesh lining were comfortable, without compromising ride quality.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

LIGHTWEIGHT AND FORM-FITTED FOR IMPROVED EFFICIENCY

11" INSEAM MEANS THEY WON'T IMPEDE OR RESTRICT YOU WHILE PEDALLING

ELASTICATED BANDS ALLOW EASY WAIST ADJUSTMENT FOR PERFECT FIT

FLOATING INNER LINING DOESN'T DETACH FROM SHORTS

ONLY ONE POCKET MEANS MINIMAL STORAGE

TESTED

SPECIALIZED ATLAS KNEE PADS

PRICE R679

SPECIALIZED.COM

KNEE NEEDS

Boost your confidence on technical terrain with these super-light, breathable kneepads for mountain bikers – or adventurous roadies with a yearning for gravel.



As trail centres grow around South Africa, so too does the number of riders venturing into more technical terrain. Add to the mix the fact that mountain bikes (and road bikes, for that matter) are becoming increasingly capable, and you have a recipe for a tumble or two, as you push yourself to try new lines and increase the speed at which you tackle your favourite section of trail or jeep track.

Lightweight, extremely breathable and featuring a low-profile design, Specialized's Atlas kneepads are aimed at trail riders and daring roadies looking for added knee protection. The pads use a thin layer of anti-shock foam to cover the knee cap, with three smaller pieces of foam that sit on each side of the leg offering additional impact resistance.


An elasticated cuff, with silicon grippers, keeps the upper part of the pad in place even after hours of pedalling. The rear panel of the pads is made from a perforated, breathable fabric, featuring a cut-out portion at the back of the knee to help keep temperatures in check when the mercury rises.

The first thing I noticed was their lightness. At 154g (for a medium-sized pair) I hardly realised I had

them on. And comfort is the main attraction of the upper section that stretches midway up your thigh, feeling almost like a knee warmer rather than a kneepad. In my opinion, this is their biggest asset: they're so light and comfy, you simply fit and forget. Fortunately, I didn't have any tumbles while testing, but Specialized have designed the foam to harden on impact, to cushion your fall.

Over a few weeks on the slopes of Table Mountain I thrashed a few sections of slippery jeep track and singletrack, trying to drift through turns and carve up the trails with the intention of putting myself in a position where I might fall. I repeated each section twice; first with the pads and then without – and I felt naked without the pads. Whether it was a sketchy off-camber turn or a steep descent, the kneepads boosted my confidence, allowing me to attack each section faster and more boldly.

I was surprised at how quickly I became used to having them there to soak up any potential impact. They're like an insurance policy in case you take a tumble.

Given their comfort and great pedal articulation, there's no reason not to take a pair of pads on your next trail ride. The boost to your confidence will make you a better rider. – *Oli Munnik* 

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

PERFECT FOR XC/TRAIL RIDERS

LIGHTWEIGHT, BREATHABLE AND PEDAL WELL

ENSURE A SNUG FIT

PROVIDE ADDED KNEE PROTECTION AGAINST ABRASIONS AND MINOR IMPACTS

ELASTICATED CUFF AND SILICONE GRIPPERS ON UPPER SECTION KEEP PAD IN PLACE

NOT DESIGNED FOR DOWNHILL OR EXTREME TRAIL RIDING

STBB 2KEEP-A-BREAST MTB CHALLENGE



THE STBB 2KEEP-A-BREAST MTB CHALLENGE HAS BUILT A REPUTATION AS ONE OF THE MUST-DO EVENTS ON THE WESTERN CAPE MTB CALENDAR. The purpose of the event is to educate and raise awareness about breast cancer. The event is family-oriented, with a food market, wine tasting and craft beer, and a play area for kids to enjoy while you're racing.

ROUTE The Bottellary MTB Trails provide the routes for the event. These trails were opened to the public in 2011 and have grown in reputation since then, offering technical singletrack, flowing jeep track, and awesome views of the Cape scenery. The racing promises to keep you fulfilled, with three routes for different levels of fitness and skill, and a five-kay children's race. **B**

DATE 10 OCTOBER 2015

PLACE OVERGAAUW WINE ESTATE, STELLENBOSCH

RACE 60KM/30KM/12KM/5KM

WHAT YOU SAID LAST YEAR

"WOW!!! What a great event. Well organised, route was marked perfectly, greatest water tables I've ever seen. Everyone friendly. Was a proper tough race, and everything for a good cause. Will definitely be back."

- Margaretha

"I did the 45 and it was well organised. Marking of track good, really challenging race, beautiful scenery. Will do it again."

- Leon Nel

"Fab Fab Fab. Such friendly people at Reg, free brekkie (if you wanted it). Fantastic and friendly water tables (the best ever). Stunning route with great views, and a good workout... Will be doing this one for years to come, and for a great cause :-)"

- Glen 'T-Bag' Hughes

WHERE TO STAY

1 APPLE TREE GUEST HOUSE

The Apple Tree Guest House offers eight en-suite rooms, as well as two luxury suites. All rooms have built-in cupboards, DSTV, air-conditioning, mini-bar and tea- and coffee-making facilities. Other attractions include Wifi, braai facilities and an outside, saltwater swimming pool, which is ideal for shaking off the race day wear and tear.

CONTACT

Reservations
Tel: 021 886 4669
Cell: 079 658 8234
Email: info@
appletreeguesthouse.co.za

2 LEKKERWIJN COUNTRY HOUSE

This historic country house offers you an authentic Cape Dutch experience as well as some convenient services like an in-house childcare centre. The race venue not that far away and with a host of social venues just up the road, this is a convenient place to stay if you want to have a great time after racing.

CONTACT

Reservations and enquiries
Tel: 021 874 1122
Cell: 076 036 0736
Email: info@lekkerwijn.com

3 DEVONVALE LODGE

This four star hotel has the Simonsberg mountains as its backdrop. Besides that you also have a range of options to choose from such as hotel rooms and self catering accommodation. You'll be out riding all day so the golf course is not an option, but when you get back after the riding you could take a dip in the pool or do some wine tasting in the wine tasting room.

CONTACT

The Devonvale Lodge at:
Tel: 021 888 4734
Email: hotel@devonvale.co.za
Web: devonvale.co.za

4 SAXENBURG WINERY

Situated 10 minutes away from Stellenbosch, this wine estate has three different accommodation options: A three-bedroom apartment, a one-bedroom apartment, and a bachelor apartment. The venue offers peace and quiet, as well as the opportunity for wine tasting right on the property – a great way to wind down after a hard day's racing.

CONTACT

Bookings
Tel: 021 903 6113
Email: booking@saxenburg.co.za

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YOUR GUIDE TO THE BEST IN CYCLING FOR OCTOBER



WESTERN CAPE
FRUITWAYS APPLE BLOSSOM CLASSIC
4 OCTOBER

This race uses many of the famous trails from Stage 2 of the FNB Wines2Whales; you wind your way around the estate over the many kilometres of pristine singletrack at the foot of the Groenlandberg mountains. Four different distances cater for the whole family. The 60km, with some steep climbs and large swathes of singletrack, will be a tough race. The 30km and 15km (and the 2km!) events are designed for the less fit rider, so there's something for everyone to enjoy.
– Renay Groustra



NORTH WEST
BESTMED SATELLITE CLASSIC
17-18 OCTOBER

The venue at Saloon Route 66 gives this race a Wild West flavour, and the route may have some of the west in it as well: the Hekpoort climb consists of 2km of ascending tarmac through the Magaliesberg mountain range. The road events on Saturday cover the familiar route, followed by an MTB event on Sunday. Both races count towards the Bestmed National Cycling series, which are spicing up the calendar for 2015 through to 2016. For more info, go to www.asgevents.co.za.
– Nic White



KWAZULU-NATAL
LAKE ELAND QUATTRO CLASSIC
4 OCTOBER

The Lake Eland Classic, powered by the Burry Stander Foundation, is held on the cusp of the Oribi Gorge, just west of Port Shepstone in southern KwaZulu-Natal. This event offers riders the chance to take in the wonderful scenery of the Lake Eland game reserve, and all the wildlife it has to offer – and, of course, all the trails, which will keep you on the edge. The race is achievable for the novice, but an awesome stage for the top contenders. For more info, check out www.roag.co.za.
– Bryan Powell

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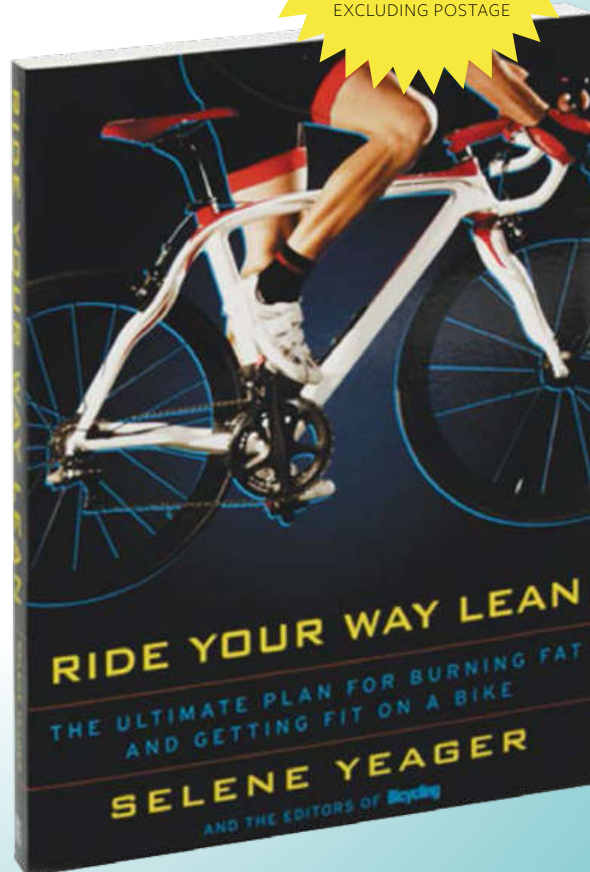
Most of us got into this sport with one common goal... to lose weight without it feeling like a chore. While we know cycling is gentle on the joints, and every ride is an adventure, losing weight quickly and efficiently can still be a bit hit and miss. But not anymore. In *Ride Your Way Lean*, expert Selene Yeager provides a comprehensive cycling plan that will allow you to shed fat, streamline your body, and improve your skills on the bike. Get it now.

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GAUTENG

ROAD

17 OCTOBER

BESTMED SATELLITE CLASSIC

106km, 80km, 60km

Saloon Route 66

Contact ASG Events

eventsupport@asgworld.co.za,

076 621 1807

Web asgevents.co.za

MTB

3 OCTOBER

NISSAN TRAILSEEKER SERIES #4 – HAKAHANA

10km, 20km, 40km, 70km

Hakahana Trails, Pretoria West

Contact Amelia Visser

info@advendurance.com,

086 199 0001

Web trailseekerseries.co.za

MOGALE SPRING CYCLE RACE

78km, 54km, 33km

WRAPD, 9 Wheeler Street,

Krugersdorp

Contact Race Office 011 660 7964/5

Web cycleevents.co.za

10 OCTOBER

XDIRT UGLY SIX MTB EVENTS

50km, 25km

Hazeldean, Pretoria

Contact Kyle

kyle@comservtech.co.za,

079 524 7914

Web entrytime.com

18 OCTOBER

BESTMED SATELLITE CLASSIC MTB

40km, 20km

Saloon Route 66

Contact ASG Events

eventsupport@asgworld.co.za,

076 621 1807

Web asgevents.co.za

BABBA'S LODGE MTB SUPER SERIES 2015 – EVENT #10

66km, 33km, 12km, 1km

Babba's Lodge, Bultfontein

Contact Andre de Beer

francosporteevents@gmail.com,

082 490 5061

Web francosport.co.za

Online Entries cycleevents.co.za

31 OCTOBER

NISSAN TRAILSEEKER

SERIES #5 – DIAMOND RUSH

10km, 20km, 40km, 70km

Petra Diamonds Mine, Oak Ave,

Cullinan

Contact Amelia Visser

info@advendurance.com,

086 199 0001

Web trailseekerseries.co.za

MULTI-STAGE

9-11 OCTOBER

ROUTE 66 MTB EXPERIENCE 3-DAY STAGE RACE

Magaliesberg

Contact Lezelle Williams

lezelle@leveragecorporation.co.za,

011 463 7730

Web cycleevents.co.za

WESTERN CAPE

ROAD

18 OCTOBER

PPA ONE TONNER 163km

Stellenbosch High School

Contact Pedal Power Association

info@pedalpower.org.za,

021 671 6340

Web pedalpower.org.za

31 OCTOBER

BONNIEVALE BONANZA

96km, 60km, 35km, 10km

Hoërskool Bonnievale, 6 Van der

Merwe Street, Bonnievale

Contact Karen Kleingeld

karenk@k2b.co.za, 021 671 4079

Web racetec.co.za

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MTB**3 OCTOBER**

LADISMITH CHEESE 7WEEKSPOORT MTB CHALLENGE 80km, 40km, 25km
Ladismith High School, Ladismith, Western Cape
Contact Dryland Event Management info@dryland.co.za, 044 279 1013
Web 7weekspoormtb.co.za

VAN LOVEREN'S JAVA MTB CHALLENGE

80km, 45km, 20km, 8km
Van Loveren Family Vineyards, Robertson
Contact Bonita Malherbe java@vanloveren.co.za, 023 615 1505
Web javamtb.co.za

4 OCTOBER

PENNYPINCHERS GOK CYCLE TOUR

104km, 57km
Brian's Grill, 44 Baron van Rheede Street, Oudtshoorn
Contact Corne Bence bence.corne@gmail.com, 082 469 2652
Web swdcycling.co.za
Online Entries cycleevents.co.za

FRUITWAYS/AQUELLE APPLE BLOSSOM MOUNTAIN CLASSIC

50km, 30km, 15km
Oak Valley Estate
Contact TNT Promotions 082 658 0112
Web amarider.co.za

10 OCTOBER

NISSAN TRAILSEEKER #3 HEMEL & AARDE

70km, 40km, 20km, 10km

Hermanus
Contact Amelia Visser info@adventure.com, 086 199 0001
Web trailseekerseries.co.za

STBB 2-KEEP-A-BREAST MTB CHALLENGE

60km, 45km, 30km, 12km, 5km
Overgaauw Wine Estate, Stellenbosch Kloof Road
Anneli Wiese anneliw@stbb.co.za, 021 406 9100
Web quicket.co.za

31 OCTOBER

BONNIEVALE BONANZA

50km, 31km
Hoërskool Bonnievale, 6 Van der Merwe Street, Bonnievale
Contact Karen Kleingeld karenk@kzb.co.za, 021 671 4079
Web racetec.co.za

MULTI-STAGE**18-24 OCTOBER**

CAPE PIONEER TREK

541km (7-day stage race)
Mossel Bay
Contact Dryland Event Management info@dryland.co.za, 044 279 1013
Web capepioneer.co.za

LIMPOPO**MTB****3 OCTOBER**

ATKV-EILAND SPA BERGFIETS WEDREN 2015

60km, 30km, 10km
ATKV-Eiland/Hans Merensky Wildtuin
Patrick Smit 083 922 7318
Web cycleevents.co.za

KWAZULU-NATAL**ROAD****18 OCTOBER**

TSOGO SUN AMASHOVA DURBAN CLASSIC

106km, 65km, 35km
Pietermaritzburg to Durban
Contact Cycle Events queries@cycleevents.co.za, 087 940 0497
Web shova.co.za
Online Entries cycleevents.co.za

MTB**3 OCTOBER**

GOODERSON NATAL SPA RESORT MTB

40km, 20km, 10km
Gooderson Natal Spa Resort
Dave Ward dave@wardevents.co.za, 082 492 1995
Web wardevents.co.za
Online Entries roag.co.za

4 OCTOBER

LAKE ELAND QUATTRO CLASSIC

45km, 25km, 10km
Lake Eland Resort
Contact Mandie Stander chmcoral@mweb.co.za, 079 493 7499
Web roag.co.za

10 OCTOBER

PECANWOOD OKTOBERFEST SPORT & LIFESTYLE

40km, 20km
Pecanwood Farm, Merrivale
Contact Events Office mrjevents@mweb.co.za, 074 821 1144
Web oktoberfestkzn.co.za
Online Entries roag.co.za

25 OCTOBER

GEARS FOR EARS MTB

FUNDRAISER 50km, 20km
Holla Trails, Ballito
Web roag.co.za

MULTI-STAGE**17-18 OCTOBER**

SEABREEZE BUILD IT BITTER-SWEET MTB CHALLENGE

100km (2-day stage race)
Rocky Bay Resorts, Park Rynie/Scottburgh
Contact Race Office lodge@rockybay.co.za, 039 976 0336
Web roag.co.za

9-11 OCTOBER

BERG & BUSH DESCENT

214km (3-Day Stage Race)
The Border Post, near Winterton
Contact Marinda Jelliman info@bergandbush.co.za, 084 7000 602
Web bergandbush.co.za

NORTH-WEST**MULTI-SPORT****17 OCTOBER**

Momentum Health OatWell DUALX #3 Powered by PeptoPro
Van Gaalen Cheese Farm, Skeerpoort
Contact Amelia Visser info@adventure.com, 086 199 0001
Web jumpetrax.com


MAURITIUS**ROAD****11 OCTOBER**

DEUTSCHE BANK 100KM CYCLE TOUR

100km, 30km
Blue Bay to Mont Choisy
Contact CRA World Events Management 031 570 7500
Web craworldeventsmanagement.com
Online Entries cycleevents.co.za

MULTI-STAGE**16-18 OCTOBER**

VETS AND MASTERS CYCLE TOUR DE MAURICE

Contact CRA World Events Management 031 570 7500
Web craworldeventsmanagement.com
Online Entries cycleevents.co.za 



BERG & BUSH DESCENT
Bundu and backyard meet at the foot of the 'berg' in this KZN classic.

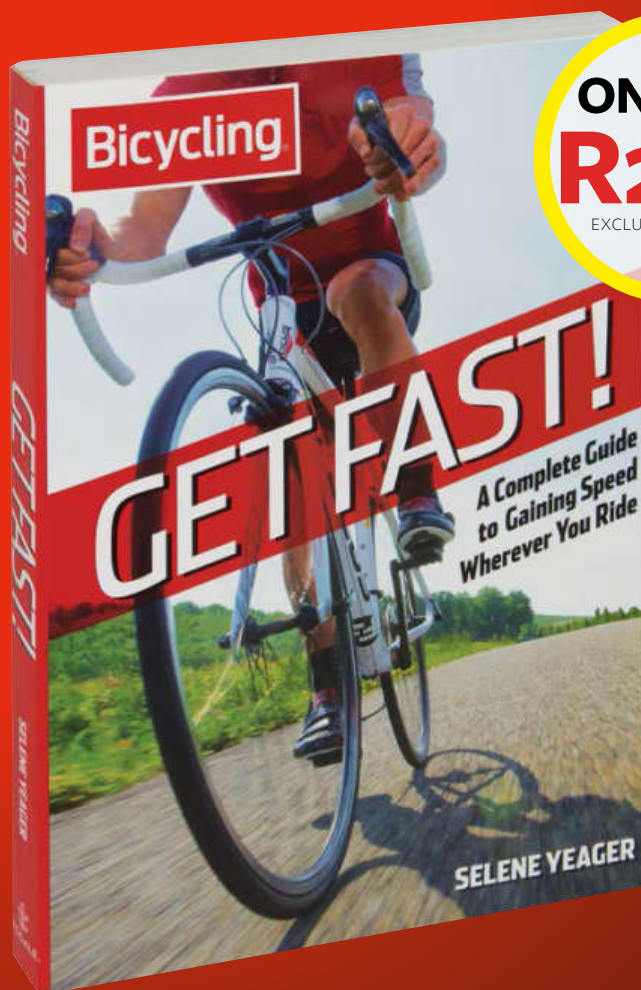


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***A Complete Guide to
Gaining Speed
Wherever You Ride***



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SUBMITTED BY @OLIVERMUNNIK

EARLY MORNING ON FRANSCHHOEK PASS IN EIGHT-DEGREE TEMPS,
WITH MY BRU CHRIS WOLHUTER RIDING AND ME BEHIND THE CAMERA
#DOYOU EVENSHOOTINTOTHE SUNMYBRU 📸

→ Share your good times with us on Instagram. Tag your ride photos to @Bicycling_SA using the hashtag #BicyclingFun and you could be featured in an upcoming issue! (Remember to mention where the shot was taken!)

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